CONSERVATION IN ’Uê˧ ja, chan˨˩ia˩˨li’, THE PLACE WHERE JAGUARS LIVE

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”The earth is

not

thirsty for

the blood of

soldiers

but for the sweat

of the

men”

Luz, San Pedro Tlatepusco, patterned in a small bag, typical handwork of the Chinantec region.

Three weeks later, the 19th of June 2016, Mexican federal police forces opened fire in the village of Nochixtlan, Oaxaca, causing the death of 11 bystanders.

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Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic study examining how widely claimed and officially recognized indigenous autonomy is construed and practiced in a state-promoted nature conservation program taking place in four indigenous Chinantec communities in the state of Oaxaca, south of Mexico. This study is based on a four-month stay in two of the communities, San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco, during the spring of 2016. Fieldwork consisted of participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

In this study, questions of autonomy and dependence are examined in a frame of political ecology focusing on the motives and actions of territorial control by varied actors including, besides the communities, state and its institutions, environmental actors and beings of nature. Understanding of these motives and forms of control is sought through anthropological theories of state control towards minorities, indigenous analysis on environmental change and theories of autonomy in relations and dependence. Mexico has a long history of homogenizing institutional politics of *indigenismo*, which have been argued to continue in today's wide offering of social and development aid programs for rural populations. This view is expanded to cover programs of environmental protection.

In this thesis, personified territorial control and territorial sanctification are argued to determine Chinantec motives towards environmental care and explain the good condition in which these tropical forests can be found today. These forms of control and sanctification have undergone historic syncretic transformations making environmental and social changes locally understandable and leading to the current environmental aspirations towards nature conservation. Syncretic, evangelic transformations are argued to explain differences in the attitudes of the two communities towards nature conservation.

Personified territorial control has incorporated environmental actors into local cosmovisions and forms of territorial control. In this study, it is analyzed how green politics have been able to promote and decline new kinds of autonomy in relations and in dependence. These processes have allowed the communities some material benefits, "development", and ways to defend their territories. Still, as this study suggests, these politics and the benefits they provide have not been able to obviate inequalities and the discrimination prevalent in Mexico as well as globally. Instead, these programs have sometimes even increased and reconstrued the pre-existing national and global inequalities, as could be found out living in the communities of Analco and San Pedro, "the zone of high marginalization".

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
autonomy, conservation, dependence, indigenous peoples, Mexico, Oaxaca, territory

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Kyseessä on etnografinen tutkimus siitä, kuinka alkuperäiskansojen laajalti vaatimaa ja virallisesti tunnustettua autonomiaa rakennetaan ja toteutetaan osana valtion tukemaa luonnonsuojeluohjelmaa neljässä chinanteco-yhteisössä Oaxacan osavaltiossa, eteläisessä Meksikossa. Tutkimus perustuu keväällä 2016 tehtyyn neljän kuukauden kenttätyöhön San Antonio Analcon ja San Pedro Tlatepuscon yhteisöissä. Kenttätyö koostui osallistuvasta havainnoinnista ja puoli-strukturoiduista haastatteluista.

Tässä tutkimuksessa autonomiaa ja riippuvuussuhteita tarkastellaan poliittisen ekologian näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan territorion hallintaa eri toimijoiden näkökulmasta: itse yhteisöjen, valtion instituutioiden, ympäristötoimijoiden ja ympäristön myyttisten olioiden. Toimijoiden motiiveja ja territoriaalisen kontrollin muotoja pyritään ymmärtämään antropologisten valtio-, autonomia- ja riippuvuusteorioiden sekä alkuperäiskansojen omien ympäristönmuutokseen liittyvien analyysitapojen kautta. Meksikon valtion pitkän integroivan valtiopolitiikan, *indigenismo,* on argumentoitu jatkuvan maaseudun yhteisöjen parissa tämän päivän kehitysapuohjelmien muodossa. Tässä pro gradu- työssä väite laajennetaan käsittämään myös yhteisöllinen luonnonsuojelu.

Tässä pro gradu- työssä henkilöityneen territoriaalisen kontrollin ja territorion pyhittämisen argumentoidaan selittävän chinantecojen motiiveja suojella luontoa ja heidän asuttamansa trooppisen metsän hyvää tilaa. Nämä kontrollin ja pyhittämisen muodot ovat käyneet läpi historiallisia, synkretistisiä muutoksia tehden ympäristölliset ja yhteiskunnalliset prosessit sekä tämän hetkiset luonnonsuojelutavoitteet paikallisille ymmärrettäviksi. Synkretistisen, protestanttisen kääntymyksen nähdään selittävän eroavaisuuksia kahden tutkitun yhteisön välillä.

Henkilöityneet territoriaalisen kontrollin muodot ovat sisällyttäneet ympäristötoimijoita paikalliseen kosmovisioon ja hallintotapoihin. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, kuinka vihreän politiikan kautta on voitu edistää ja toisaalta tukahduttaa uusia autonomian muotoja suhteiden ja riippuvuuksien kautta. Nämä prosessit ovat tarjonneet yhteisöille materiaalisia etuuksia, ”kehitystä”, ja uusia menetelmiä puolustaa territoriotaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa kuitenkin argumentoidaan, että vihreä politiikka ja sen tuomat materiaaliset edut eivät ole voineet syrjäyttää Meksikossa ja globaalilla tasolla olemassa olevia epätasa-arvoisia valtasuhteita ja syrjintää. Sen sijaan nämä ohjelmat ovat toisinaan jopa edesauttaneet epätasa-arvoisuuksien säilymistä sekä kansallisesti että kansainvälisesti, kuten voidaan todeta asuttaessa San Antonio Analcon ja San Pedro Tlatepuscon chinanteco-yhteisöissä, niin sanotulla ”korkean marginalisoitumisen alueella”.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
alkuperäiskansat, autonomia, luonnonsuojelu, Meksiko, Oaxaca, riippuvaisuus, territorio

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I was sitting in a café with a Mexican friend back in Helsinki. “What do you miss the most in Mexico?” …*I miss Chinantla, I miss my friends, I miss the communities, where I did my fieldwork, I miss Oaxacan food, I miss the combi full of people and with tropical music playing out load, I miss the street leading to central with all the stalls selling pirate dvd’s, I miss the city lights when travelling between Oaxaca and DF in the night, I miss Chinantla…*

The greatest acknowledgements for making this work possible belong to the people of the communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco.

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I am thankful for the civil organizations CORENCHI and Geoconservación A.C. and for the personnel working in these. Special thanks go to Diana Denham and Fernando Mondragon, who introduced me in the Chinantla region.

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”It was a cloudy day. Like today. I was there, sending whatsapp messages. I was up there. Where I showed you yesterday [where the telephone network signal can be caught].

But people say… We have a belief here. There is a bird, that gives you a warning. That hummingbird… It gives you a warning, when there is a danger, when something is approaching you.

And it was then, that this animal, this bird gave me the warning. And I know, something is getting closer to you, something will happen to you. I know, because my ancestors have commented on this.

And what did I do then? I was chatting there, chatting and chatting… I had my mules, my animals tied, because I was going to treat them. We give them a chemical, when they have bugs. And it started doing… The animal.

And that was when I gave up chatting… It just passed by, ppssssst… Something strange and you need to be on alert… That is, what we know and it’s for our past, for our past people. That is, how we have known to deal with that.

…And again, like this: tsin-tsin-tsin. Hrrrrhrrrhrrrr. That’s, what they do. They are of the family of hummingbirds, but it’s not a hummingbird. It’s of the size of a hummingbird. More or less. Hummingbird is more agile: tsi-tsi-tsi… In my family, we know that they are of the family of hummingbirds. But scientifically we don’t know that.”

Me, cutting the story: And how do you call them?

- *Te[1].*

Té?

- *Te[1].*

”And then there is a hill. You go up to the hill and down towards other villages… I saw something and I went closer without distinguishing, which animal it was, still far from me... Well, you know when the cattle walk there, the road gets slippery… And I kept on getting closer like that until I realized, that it was a tiger. A jaguar.

It stayed looking at me… I had a gun. And that desire, that I had was… These desires didn’t leave me. I had this desire… But it never happened. I don’t know, what happened, but after all it was never, what I wanted to do. I slipped, and no, the gun and…

The jaguar leapt to the hill.”

Story of Abelino from the community of San Antonio Analco of his encounter with the jaguar.

1. INTRODUCTION

This is an ethnographic study of how a community forest conservation project is taking place in two rural, indigenous Chinantec communities in the state of Oaxaca, Southern Mexico. My aim is to study the ways in which widely claimed and legislatively determined indigenous autonomy, self-determination and local government are expressed and construed through practices of nature protection at local and communal levels. Since 2004, the communities of San Antonio Analco (later on, referred to as Analco) and San Pedro Tlatepusco (referred to as San Pedro) have formed part of an indigenous organization, CORENCHI A.C. (Comité de los Recursos Naturales de la Chinantla Alta, Natural Resources Committee of the Upper Chinantla)[1], which channels monetary support from various governmental programs to the communities that provide "ecosystem services".

This study is carried out with the consent of the communal authorities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco, and draws from my four-month stay in these two communities mainly during spring 2016. The original study, and a Spanish translation of it, will be taken to the communities following its approval, as agreed with the communal authorities. This study is strongly connected to time and place. I hope that it would serve for the inhabitants of Analco and San Pedro as a (subjective, yes) portrayal of the time I got to stay with the inhabitants of these two localities.

During my stay, life in the communities was passing through its annual routine in the agricultural calendar: from the time of *limas* and *tepejilotes* to the time of *mangos, chinenes* and *quelites,* from burning *rozo* to sowing and harvesting *milpa*[2], as determined by the rhythm of swidden cultivation practiced in the area… Still, the time of my fieldwork was also marked with several historical events. At the state level, June 2016, saw electoral selection period of Oaxacan state gubernatorial candidates and municipal presidential candidates. At the federal level, an energetic reform[3] to the Mexican Constitution, that had passed through parliament in 2013, opened this sector for private competition, posing new threats to local communities. Another significant characteristic of the time was the drop in the cultivation of coffee, a consequence of the plant disease *roya*, which was distressing regional farmers since the year 2014. Changes in the coffee

[1] See *Appendix 1*. for all the abbreviations present in this thesis.
[2] See *Appendix 1*. for a dictionary of Mexican cultural expressions.
[3] See GOB 2014.

market have narrowed the formerly dominating sources of livelihoods in the communities, which are categorized as "zone of high marginalization" by Mexican state institutions[4]. These shifts in the coffee market led community inhabitants to look for alternative sources of monetary income, such as applying for governmental funded projects, like conservation and beekeeping programs. Participation in these programs have brought changes to the social organization of the communities in relation to the state and other external actors as well as to the surrounding forest and waters. This thesis aims to analyse these changes with an emphasis on the communal autonomy and intermingled relations of dependence and territorial control.

1.1. Objectives and background of the study

I went to Chinantla for the first time in the beginning of the year 2014, enrolled in an academic exchange program in Mexico City at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). A friend of mine gave me the contact information of Geoconservación, the environmental non-governmental organization working in the region of Chinantla. She knew my aspirations were to get out of the smoky and chaotic capital city, "the monster" as my Mexican friends would call it, in order to do some voluntary work. At this time, I stayed a week giving English classes with the local secondary school teachers in the two upper communities represented by CORENCHI, Santa Cruz Tepetotutla (commonly Santa Cruz) and San Antonio del Barrio (el Barrio).

Thematically, elaboration of this thesis started out as a result of my first brief visit to Chinantla. I ended up introducing the Chinantec communal conservation project as part of my final assignments at UNAM. I also wrote my bachelor's thesis about questions of indigenous autonomy, making an analytical comparison between Oaxaca and its neighboring state of Chiapas, famous for being the land of the indigenous *Zapatismo* movement[5]. As in my first visit to the region, it was as much of a coincidence that Chinantla became the scene of my master's thesis as well. When settling myself in Oaxaca again in the beginning of 2016, I had not yet defined a place to conduct my fieldwork, and while I began exploring potential locations, I used to go visit and help out a friend of

[4] "Marginalization" will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

[5] Maya indigenous peoples' autonomous movement. Movement bursted out in 1994 seemingly as a consequence to the signing of NAFTA free trade agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States.

mine who sold coffee at the organic market in town. It was there where I ran into the people of Geoconservación once again.

When I initially made plans for my upcoming fieldwork, I never intended to return to Chinantla second time. I already knew well that these communities lacked means of communication and would be difficult for me to access. During my very first visit in 2014, I was sitting in front of the communal agent's office in el Barrio, listening to the communal assembly together with the women and children gathered in front of the office window. Back then I was thinking silently that I was not able to understand any of the atmosphere that seemed particularly "strange" to me. This time, now in 2016, contact with the Oaxacan NGO made it seem possible, and for me the most appropriate option to go back to the land, *tierra*, where the ideas and questions of communal organization had started to interest me in the first place.

Later on, after returning to reflect on my experience, I could find a common term, a roof to my questions, which was "autonomy", self-determination. This way of problematizing and forming research questions, even based on my already lived experience in the field, was of course also due to my own commitments and other awoken interests towards different forms of social movements, people's power and resistance. These concurrent topics in Latin American studies animate the daily lives of millions of people living in Mexico, including my friends and myself during the year of my exchange studies. The formulation of my research topic also coincides with the rise of new political, contradicting extremes, both in the official and in the popular sectors, in Europe after the continent awoke to the financial and demographic crisis that started out from its Southern parts around 2010.

Participant democracy of communal assemblies and local administration of indigenous governments are widely understood as an alternative, opposite and somehow more "natural" or "original" way of social and political organization. So, as I was thinking, to study questions of autonomy in such a context can be enriching in order to understand the local reality, but also to reflect on wider political tendencies around the globe. Now, after having sat in dozens of community gatherings and assemblies or simply at the outskirts of the basketball field together with women and children, as it was in the very beginning, the life in the communities does not seem so strange to me anymore, but extremely interesting due to the richness of local past and current processes in terms of indigenous autonomy, which this thesis aims to explain.

When first entering fieldwork, I wanted to observe as widely as possible, holistically, and did not draw specific research questions, as I did not know the local context well enough yet to do so. This was also convenient for the all-inclusive nature of my main research method of participant observation. I held on to my main dilemma measuring the opposite but intermingled processes of dominance and control together with self-determination and liberation with the tentative, main research question:

1. How are indigenous autonomy and dependency construed and practiced in a specific nature conservation project?

After returning from the field and having analyzed my experience and data, I formed the following research questions, which this thesis seeks to analyze in depth:

2. How has state control towards indigenous populations been practiced in Mexico, in Oaxaca, in the municipality of San Felipe Usila, and most precisely, in terms of the communitarian conservation project?
3. How have the entrance of a conservation program and other syncretic processes influenced the ways in which people understand nature and environmental changes?
4. How can the current environmental ambitions on the one hand, promote novel kinds of autonomy and self- determination, and on the other hand, create new dependencies?

1.2. Context

Mexico is a federation formed by 31 states and the capital area of Mexico City and the surrounding suburbia of Estado de México. Legislative and administrative power is divided by states: each of them has its own constitution, congress and government. The state of Oaxaca is further divided into districts and to municipalities administered by councils, *ayuntamientos*. In Oaxaca, there are 570 municipalities and the major part of them are administrated collectively by indigenous customs, *usos y costumbres*. *Usos y costumbres* include the proper decision-making organisms by communal assemblies (representation of so called direct or participative democracy in which at least all the male community members have right to vote), the division of public offices (*sistema de los cargos*) and own customary judicial systems. In the Mexican national political order, the three major political parties are currently PRI, PAN and PRD, with the rising challenger, MORENA. Of these, PRI has maintained its historical position, and in the recent elections

2016 once again recuperated dominance, especially in the state of Oaxaca. (Denham et al. 2008, 19-22).

The state of Oaxaca counts with a quantity of almost four million registered inhabitants (INEGI 2015). Besides the state calculates periodically, with a peak during national vacations, a remarkable amount of Mexican and foreign visitors enjoying the lively capital city center, surrounding mountains or beaches of the Pacific Ocean. Oaxaca de Juárez is the capital city of the state of Oaxaca. It is a colorful meeting point of the cultures of close by indigenous villages and a market place to sell their distinctive products, from vegetables and fruits to handicrafts. The second city in size is the district capital San Juan Bautista Tuxtepec, being the closest city to the communities of Analco and San Pedro. With its tropical heat and rising factory chimneys the city of Tuxtepec provides quite a different scene from the state capital and is of a little interest to outside visitors except for the people from the surrounding municipalities handling their ordinary and administrative affairs and visiting friends and family members. Still, Tuxtepec is the most important industrial city of the state of Oaxaca with its beer, soda, sugar and paper factories and industrial plantations.

My decision to study questions of indigenous autonomy and nature protection, particularly in the context of the state of Oaxaca, is reasonable even by other means than the fact that I had become familiar with the region during my former exchange studies. Of the 31 states forming the United States of Mexico, Oaxaca counts with the highest number of indigenous language speakers with 16 recognized ethnic groups, Chinantecs being one of them (INEGI 2016). Together with its neighbor Chiapas, the two Southern states are officially recognized as the poorest regions of Mexico in terms of monetary wealth, yet the most rich regions in biodiversity (García Aguirre 2015, 2).

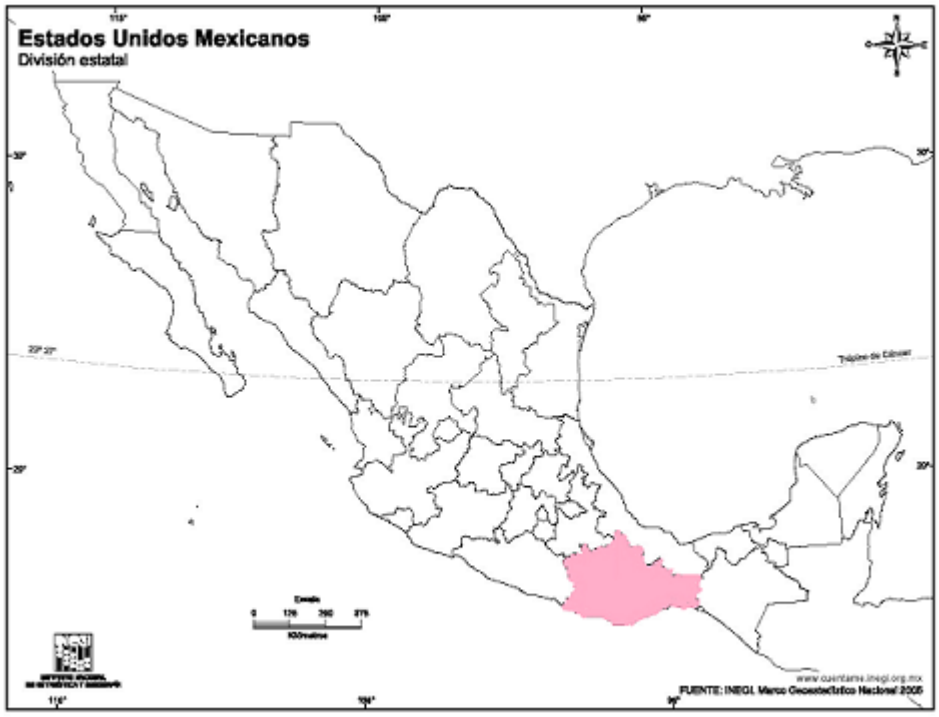


Figure 1. Oaxaca in the federal state of Mexico (INEGI).

Many of the studies discussing autonomy of indigenous groups in Mexico, with good reasons, make reference to the ongoing situation in Chiapas and *Zapatismo* movement[6]. Although there are some similarities in conditions, Oaxaca diverges from its neighbor's circumstances in relevant ways. In official and media discourses, the Maya indigenous peoples are commonly criminalized in Chiapas, and the separation between the state and the autonomous sphere is highlighted, even distorted[7]. By contrast, Oaxaca is the only state in Mexico that has legalized in its constitutional law the autonomous governments of its indigenous communities and municipalities, the practice of customary legal and political order of the so-called *usos y costumbres*.

It is possible that due to this recognition process culminating in the legislative allowance in the mid 1990's Oaxaca has taken a notably different path from other states

[6] See such (and many others) classical Mexican writers as Díaz Polanco 2009; Stavenhagen 2000; Korsbaek & Sámano-Rentería 2007. From foreign writers see for an example Graeber 2002.

[7] In my view, based on conversations with people, who have experience of the Zapatist context, there exist inner movement strains and tendencies towards different types of cooperation and contradictions. In the Zapatist case, the last turn, colliding with the idea of sharp separation between the state and autonomous groups, has been the decision to put an indigenous candidate to the federal presidential elections of 2018, see CNI & EZLN 2016.

because the autonomy efforts have been conducted in relatively peaceful and non-violent ways. This differs significantly from the paramilitary ways of organization in Chiapas and other parts of Mexico, for example, recently in Michoacán and the mountainous parts of the North of the country[8]. In Oaxaca the struggle, *lucha*, for autonomy has mainly been fought not by self-separation and armed confrontations but instead by making relations and "productive projects". The way of relating with different actors, especially state institutions, differentiates the autonomous efforts of Oaxacan communities from those previously mentioned, where separation from the state is highlighted (Díaz-Polanco 2009, 59, 64). The communities pertaining to CORENCHI provide an apposite context to study the construction of indigenous autonomy, because state relations are central to their experience as part of a governmental conservation program.

My initial purpose was not to include two rural communities as sites of my study, again, this was determined by a coincidence. This was suggested by the manager of Geoconservación. At first, I took it slightly reluctantly, as two communities seemed like too much for the restricted scope of a master's thesis. Now I think Analco and San Pedro form a worthy pair and it is thus relevant to study them together. Geoconservación's manager, knowing my topic of study, suggested that I consider including one or both of these communities and to exclude the two other communities, Santa Cruz and el Barrio. This sounded reasonable to me since Santa Cruz and el Barrio are located closer to the state capital Oaxaca de Juárez, they receive the most attention in terms of visitors and environmental and conservation activities and were involved in CORENCHI's earliest formation since the 1990's. By contrast, Analco and San Pedro are located on the other side of the Sierra Madre peaks, closer to the municipal center Usila and the city of Tuxtepec, much farther from the state capital, a 15-hour journey by foot and car, and have not been studied as frequently as the other CORENCHI communities. These communities were not part of the forming negotiations and the initial activities of conservation in the zone, rather both of them sought to join for their own reasons that will be discussed further in this thesis.

In February 2016, I was supposed to visit both of the communities, first Analco, then San Pedro. I went walking through the conserved territory from Santa Cruz with

[8] Of the situation of the self-defensive movements, *autodefensas*, as a response to acts part of the so called "war against drugs" in Mexico, see La Jornada 2014. Of the current armed confrontations of indigenous defense of territory in the North of Mexico, see La Jornada 2016.

CORENCHI representatives after we had participated in CORENCHI's general assembly in Santa Cruz Tepetotutla. From Analco I was supposed to continue to San Pedro. And then, as the NGO manager had told me, "decide where I would like to work", as if it would depend on my decision rather than communities' acceptance of my research proposal, which was my initial concern. I was not supposed to go to San Pedro by myself. Geoconservación had had problems in the community and the manager saw it better, if we went together so he could present me, something which I have retrospectively disagreed with, as I never found any difficulty in San Pedro, finding the inhabitants as approving and warm-hearted people.

The manager of the environmental organization never accomplished his planned visit to San Pedro during my stay in Chinantla. This determined Analco as the site of my study in the first place as I was already (left) there and the community authorities allowed me to stay and conduct interviews for my study. Still, all the time during my fieldwork in Analco that I heard about San Pedro, it started to seem to me more and more relevant to include both of the communities. This was also due to the fact that I had already spoken with the common goods officer of San Pedro during my first fieldwork day in Santa Cruz, during the CORENCHI assembly meeting, about my interest to conduct master's thesis fieldwork in the community. The officer made it clear, that the community might refuse my study. "*I'm of good mood, soy de buena onda*," I had told the officer. The officer started laughing: "*So are we*," and asked whether he should already call the assembly for the coming weekend in order to discuss my study. Well, I did not go to San Pedro that weekend, but I went there almost three months later with local CORENCHI technicians and the community secretary returning from the annual biodiversity and cultural festival held in the communities of Santa Cruz and el Barrio in late April 2016.

Besides their similar condition of being the two most remote and in some aspects less recognized communities of CORENCHI, there are some distinguishing features that made it relevant and at the same time fascinating for me to conduct the study in both of the communities. These denominating factors started to appear to me already during my first months of fieldwork, when listening to how people in Analco and in the environmental organization talked about San Pedro. Some exceptional differences between the two communities are that Analco possesses several material benefits that San Pedro lacks, such as vehicular road access and a health care center. As seemingly different are the attitudes of people from the two communities towards governmental projects and

conservation. An illustrative example comes from beekeeping. In the beginning of year 2016 Analco was included to a beehive project aimed towards commercialization of ecologically produced honey by a CORENCHI union of communal enterprises. Analco was not supposed to enter this project in the first place, but was accepted instead of San Pedro, as San Pedro withdrew at the last minute, due to some disagreements inside the group of beekeepers.

After knowing both of the communities, I realized that these seemingly exaggerated differences are actually not so clear at all. People from Analco might seem more competitive and positive towards ideas of money, but are still on the other hand extremely generous and caring. People in San Pedro might be more suspicious about governmental cooperation and the conservation project, but this does not make them more autonomous or self-determined. For this reason, I will not base my study on a direct comparison of the two communities. An essentializing and simplistic understanding of these two localities and their people would be a danger of this kind of a juxtaposition. The inner and inter communitarian processes, feelings and histories are too complex to put into such a narrow delineator. The differences and similitudes of the communities are presented throughout the study and are the reason that this kind of a multi-sited fieldwork (at a very local level, though) was relevant for the relatively narrow scope of a master's thesis.

Chinantla

Chinantla is a demographic and natural region in the valley of river Papaloapan and determined by the high figures of Sierra Norte mountains[9]. The region extends from the northeast of the state of Oaxaca to neighboring state of Veracruz[10]. It is divided into three zones depending on their altitude: lower Chinantla, *zona baja* (depending on the source usually more or less from the sea level till 500 meters above it), mid Chinantla, *zona media* (from 500 meters to 1500 meters) and upper Chinantla, *zona alta* (1500 and above) (CONANP 2005, 14). CORENCHI communities are located in the mid Chinantla, with

[9] The name "Chinantla" comes from Náhuatl and signifies probably "the space in between mountains" (de Teresa 2011, 17).

[10] Some parts of the state of Veracruz could be considered as an extension of Chinantla, due to the forced migration of Chinantec populations in the 1970's following displacement from the Cerro de Oro Hydroelectric project (Bartolomé & Barabas 1997, 79).

the inhabited parts of San Pedro and Analco settled between 400 and 600 meters of their total territory.

Chinantlan forests form the third largest jungle area in Mexico, after Lacandona (Chiapas) and Chimalapas (Oaxaca), and the most important inhabited jungle in the density of population (de Teresa 2011, 18). The forest surrounding the communities of Analco and San Pedro is composed mainly by humid cloud forest (*bosque mesófilo*, upper parts) and tropical jungle (lower parts). These forests provide a home for several species of plants and animals, such as wild boar, lowland paca and deer, several species of eagles, and snakes, including boa and rattlesnake. Numerous endangered felines inhabit these jungles as well, including pumas and jaguars. Of the plant and animal species found in Chinantla, 53 are under legal protection of Mexican law and several are rare or endemic to the region (Bray et al. 2008, 8).

Administratively, 14 municipalities comprise Chinantla. All of the CORENCHI communities reside within the municipality of San Felipe Usila, district of San Juan Bautista Tuxtepec. Chinantla's population of approximately 124 000 inhabitants are 79, 6 % indigenous by any official means (de Teresa 2011, 11). Tonal Chinantec dialects form a family of 14 mutually unintelligible languages with local variations within each one of them (Rensch 1989, 3). In the communities of San Pedro and Analco, Chinantec mother tongue is dominated as the first language. The Chinantec language spoken in the community of San Pedro is an interesting mix of different variants close to each other. The families originate from distint near by communities, mainly Santa Cruz and el Barrio or the neighboring Santiago Tlatepusco. Only some families are original inhabitants of San Pedro and dominate the original dialect, *dialecto,* presenting most similarity to the Chinantec language spoken in the community of San Juan Palantla due to a migration caused by a flood in San Pedro in 1928. The dialect of Analco seems to have less similarities with the Chinantec variants of the surrounding communities. The community used to be a neighborhood, *un barrio,* of the adjacent municipality of San Juan Bautista Tlacoatzintepec. Although Analco residents, *analqueños* comment that the dialect of Tlacoatzintepec is not too similar to theirs, the variants of other CORENCHI communities are almost unintelligible to them. In both of the localities there are some inhabitants who migrated from the municipality center of Usila, mainly women who married into the community. These inhabitants speak Spanish with the others because their Chinantec

dialect from the municipal center differs sufficiently with the variants spoken in the rural localities of the mountains above.

Figure 2. Chinantla situated in the state of Oaxaca. Municipalities in Chinantla. Municipal centre of Usila (red point) and the localities: Analco (green point) and San Pedro (blue point). (ILV).

The main means of livelihood in San Pedro and Analco is the cultivation of basic crops, such as corn, beans, squash and yucca, for families' own consumption. Cultivation fields, *milpas*, consist of these different species grown together with wild, edible herbs, *quelites*, that also form part of the daily diet. Villagers practice a shifting cultivation method consisting of the cycles of clear, burn and mulch (*tumba, quema* and *rozo)* with two annual sowings, one in June and another one sometime from November till December. Despite the annual[11] burn of the cultivation parcels, the forests of the CORENCHI communities are well conserved in comparison to the common tendencies

[11] Only once a year in the month of May. For the winter sowing, terrains are usually prepared manually with a machete.

in the region of Chinantla. Areas in the lower Chinantla have been degraded over the last several hundred years from unsustainable intensive agriculture of commercial plants, including tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, tropical fruits; banana and pineapple, and largescale cattle farming (CONANP 2005, 21).

Since the early decades of the 20th century, there has been continuous investigation of both anthropological and biological character amongst the Chinantecs, attributed to the "less studied indigenous populations". The earliest written record of the region was delivered in the 16th century by Catholic missionaries, who entered the region under duty for their prostheletizing, civilizing and religious conversion[12]. The first scientific investigations were journeys of exploration. Anthropologist Roberto Weitlaner, later known as the founding scholar of Chinantlan studies, travelled by horse with his entourage through the region, passed through localities and gathered a great amount of information of the lifestyles and legends of the Chinantecs. Weitlaner and his companions made five journeys to Chinantla in total between 1934 and 1936 (Espinosa 1961, 18). In the footprints of Weitlaner many later on known researchers, such as Bernard Bevan and Mariano Espinosa, carried out investigations in the region and published books with quite similar contributions of general, demographic information[13]. The pre-Hispanic development of the region has been later analyzed by Chagoya Morgan (1985) based on archaeological findings and clues.

After these initial steps in the increasing amount of knowledge of the Chinantecs, there has been quite some investigation afterwards: thesis of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree and investigation made for governmental institutions and aiming for more practical kind of demographic and biological information for the compilation of national statistics and governmental programs. In the CORENCHI communities many studies have been conducted as part of or in cooperation with the conservation management. Of the communities of this study, quite surprisingly (taking into account the more remote location and difficulties in accessibility) San Pedro is the one that has received more outside investigators. Anthropologist Jose Manuel Escalante wrote his extensive ethnography *San Pedro Tlatepusco, el pueblo que se inundó* (the village, that drowned) in the late 1990's. Currently San Pedro receives regularly biology students from the

[12] As the result of these investigations *Papeles de la Chinantla* book series was published around the mid 20th century. See Bevan 1938; Espinosa 1961; Weitlaner & Castro 1954 & 1973.
[13] See Quijado 1579; Diego de Esquibel 1579, both in Bevan 1938.

CIIDIR polytechnic institute, that co-operates with the conservation actors. Analco has also been subject of various investigations and the inhabitants remember warmly "*el antropológo José Antonio*", who used to stay in the community and learned to speak Chinantec with the villagers. Otherwise his figure was left mysterious to me as I was never able to find him in person, neither his study.

Especially earlier, but even recent anthropological investigation in the zone make still a lot of reference to the studies of Roberto Weitlaner and his contemporaries or preserve the same, classical Chinantec myths that Weitlaner presents already in the book *Relatos, Mitos y Leyendas de la Chinantla* published in 1977. All this information is surely of value and it is correct and even shocking to notice, how certain things have not changed from the times of these early explorations: women in Analco still brush their hair with aromatic *mamey* oil, people in San Pedro turn around small rocks in the river bench to look for crayfish and in both of the communities, people use to sit down to refresh themselves with the juicy sugar cane during hot afternoons. Still, many things have changed: sheet metal has replaced wild hay, *zacate,* as construction material, embroidered *huipiles* have now together with the more traditional Chinantec patternings also adopted new ones, for an example of the colorful figures of Disney characters, and in an increasing amount drinking soda has replaced chewing sugar cane as the daily refreshment. These more detailed examples are illustrative of wider cultural and social processes that the region and its localities have undergone during the decades of investigation in Chinantla, in the specific case of my investigation: due to the entrance of the forest conservation program as well. Recognizing the importance of the earlier accounts, the aim of my study is to provide a realistic adscription of the current moment in the two communities and not to over emphasize neither the occurring changes nor the present continuities. I have chosen the title of my study, *Conservation in 'Uêɜ ja, chan$_2$^{1}ia^1$_2$li', place where jaguars live*, mainly as a citation of the official logo of CORENCHI (as it is written in Chinantec of Santa Cruz Tepetotutla[14]), but also to reflect on these changes and continuities by making in this spirit a slight reference to the acknowledged, classical study of Weitlaner and Castro, *Usila, morada de colibries,* place where humming birds live (1973).

[14] See *Appendix 1*. for a detailed dictionary and reading instructions for the Chinantec terms present in this study.

CORENCHI A.C.

Civil organization CORENCHI A.C. was founded in 2004 as a coalition of four indigenous Chinantec communities: Santa Cruz Tepetotutla, San Antonio del Barrio, Santiago Tlatepusco and San Pedro Tlatepusco. The communities of San Antonio Analco and Nopalera del Rosario (from the municipality of Valle Nacional) integrated the organization during the same year. Currently, in 2016, the organization is formed by four communities being Santa Cruz, el Barrio, Analco and San Pedro. All of these communities pertain to the municipality of Usila and share common border lines as neighboring communities forming this way a unified area of more or less 19 000 hectares dedicated to communitarian conservation. In Analco this quantity of conserved land is 2050 hectares of the total amount of 2717 hectares of communal territory. In the petition for governmental funding for the five upcoming years from 2016 onwards, even the emaciated coffee parcels were put under conservation to gain monetary aid instead of the failed crop cultivation.

San Pedro has wider area of territory than Analco and it has a high quantity of undiscovered, "virgin forest" (*bosque virgen*). The total amount of conserved hectares in San Pedro is 5000 of its 6000 and "something" (*y tanto*) surface area. The quantity of hectares under conservation determines the amount of money that each community receives from governmental conservation programs. Communities receive currently monetary funds for "ecosystem services" from the National Forest Commission (CONAFOR, Comisión Nacional Forestal) through two different governmental conservation programs: so called normal program (Programa Normal) and concurrent funds (Fondos Concurrentes). Oaxacan civil organization Geoconservación operates as a technical adviser, *asesor técnico,* between state institutions and the communities. Having contracted an accredited and paid technical adviser is a condition imposed by CONAFOR.

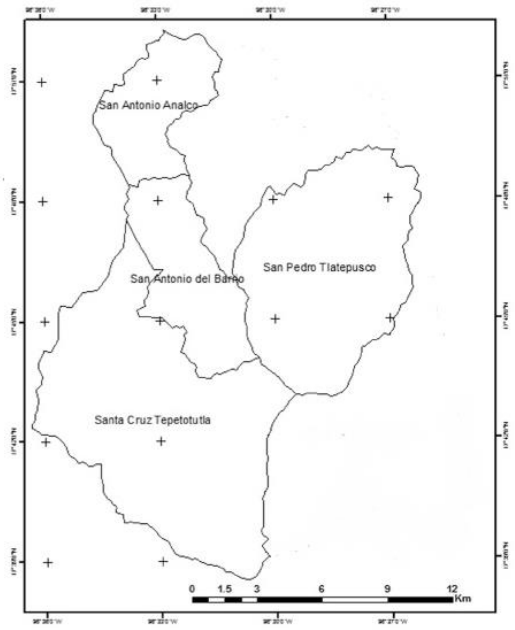


Figure 3. Communities of CORENCHI. (Bray et al. 2012, 157).

People from the communities refer to the money received from the conservation program as *"un apoyo",* an aid, or as "a small stimulus" emphasizing that the amount of money individually received is not sufficient to be "*un pago*", a real payment as the official term "payment for ecosystem services" implies. In Analco, where the amount of payment is less, villagers approximate it to reach from 3000 till 4000 Mexican pesos[15] yerly for each *comunero*, community member with the right to landholding. In San Pedro, the amount can be higher, until 9000 pesos[16] per year. It must be noted that besides higher, almost double amount of conserved territory, in San Pedro, the tendency to share the money for individual purposes is more evident than in Analco, where the money is more probably used for common necessities, such as transportation expenditures of the community authorities.

Communities that are part of the program need to possess an official agreement of their communal territory borders, *"carpeta básica",* and produce together with the technical adviser a program for sustainable management practices, Programa de Mejores Prácticas de Manejo (Program for the Best Management Practices), and an official document, "*ordenamiento territorial"* (territorial order), in which they agree on sustainable land use and other regulatory practices. These practices include the right to

[15] Between 150 and 200 eur.
[16] Over 400 eur.

cultivate only in destined zones, preventive acts to avoid forest fires, protection and cleaning of water resources, control of the extermination of garbage and the obligation to avoid extensive farming, use of agrochemicals and hunting wild animals outside *milpas*. Any major changes in land use, such as mining or construing a dam, are forbidden.

Two of the initially participating communities, Santiago Tlatepusco and Nopalera del Rosario, decided to leave the conservation program a couple of years earlier to my research. This was an outcome of a conflict between two environmental organizations, Geoconservación being one of them. As I was commented by the vice officer of common goods, Maurilio, in the community of San Pedro: "*There were two technical advisers, one said this and another one said that, mejor yaa…"*. "The advisers" of the other organization, in the beginning working together with Geoconservación, did not have as strong presence in the core communities of the conservation program, Santa Cruz and el Barrio, neither in dedicated Analco. But the community of San Pedro, being also a close neighbor to Santiago, one of the communities that decided to resign the program, is still divided by the conflict of interests between different civil organization representatives and in doubt of whether to continue within the program or not.

San Antonio Analco, Aw³hmāy¹³ ("life in between two arroyos")

"'It looks really beautiful,' says cuñada of Valentina as we stand in the basketball field, cancha, and look up to the colorful houses built in the mountainside. Smoke is slowly rising up from some of them and happy corrido songs mix with the menacing reggaeton beat in a perfect harmony. Some women and young girls leaning to each other sit in the staircase crossing the whole village, meanwhile an old lady passes carrying a heavy load of fire wood on her back." (Fieldnotes, the 20th of February 2016).

San Antonio Analco is a Chinantec community of an estimated 384 habitants, located in between two natural streamlets and by the river, popularly called Río Grande, "because the rivers Tlacoatze and Perfume have already joint". Downstream the river meets Río Usila and flows to the city of Tuxtepec. Analco lies in an eight kilometers distance from Usila and since year 2009 is connected to the municipality center by a drivable road. The inhabitants of the community are originated from the neighboring municipality of Tlacoatzintepec, situated on the opposite hillside at the other side of the

river, and of which Analco used to be a suburbia until the 18th century (Chagoya Morgan 1985, 46). Don Anselmo Manuel, an elderly *comunero* describes:

"*Y orale*[17]*, before there was not a village here, here! Before: some people lived here and others there. Where there is a hill, where there is water. Bueno, one group here, another group there. Because there is always animal, always jaguar, close together, hay fuerza… A person from here, from Analco. From here, here! A person that comes and goes, he went away. And came back. To join this village, dicen.*"

Anselmo Manuel continues, describing the early foundation of the village with it's religious, already Catholic base: "*They came here, here to Analco. Our grandparents first joint the village, dicen, the year 1707. And 1711 they came here with their documento… Dicen: one person from here, from Analco went away. He is called Tomás… Tomás Montaña, dice, he was the founder of the village… Seven years he walked outside. And he looked a while, a while there in a village, that is called San Juan Analco. Close to Ixtlán. He came back here in 1707… Because there is terrain to work. And in 1711, dice, they made the church. They made a big church. 30 meters of length and so… It's not the same anymore, it was 30 meters of length they say and I don't know, how many meters of the other direction. It is that he took the measurement from there, close to Oaxaca.*"

Nowadays in the studied communities the daily tasks begin early in the small hours. Women get up and bake corn tortillas, usually an amount that is sufficient for the coming few days and to prepare a packed lunch, if their husbands are leaving to work in *milpas* that are usually located from half an hour till couple of hours walking distance from the community. Children go to school. In Analco basic education is offered from preschool till secondary school, from 3 till 15 years of age. During the daytime, each person is concentrated on the family's daily household and farming work that can vary depending of the season, weather, gender and age. In the night, after sun slowly starts to set down, villagers gather to the basketball field, *cancha*, surrounded by the administrative offices of the communal agent, *agencia*, and the officer of common goods, *comisariado.* Also, the school buildings, Catholic church and a small health care center with one nurse are located around the basketball field. Every night assemblies, reunions and workshops,

[17] I have left some expressions of the straight interview quotes in Spanish (such as *orale, pues, este* etc.). These expressions do not have a good, equivalent translation and are descriptive of the persons' way of expression. Leaving them without a translation does not change the contents or meanings of the statements.

communal administrative tasks, take place in the hours after the sunset. The offices of the communal agent and the officer of common goods open their doors every night and if there is no reunion including all the community members, *comuneros* with *cargo* gather to go through paperwork related to different governmental programs in which the community participates. Sometimes, when there is a deadline of an application, administrators and their boards stay in until late night with doors open and light coming out from the office windows.

"In the early evening hours, villagers start to gather around cancha. First, school children practice for a sports event that will take place in Usila in March. Then, young men play football at least until the hour that agencia will be opened. Elder men start to gather to cancha as well, hanging first in its outer corners and little by little moving towards the soon opening offices. In the night, Pedro, responsible for the community vigilance committee, is the last one to leave the office and to make sure that the door is properly locked." (Fieldnotes, the 24th of February 2016).

San Pedro Tlatepusco, Sa²Pe³ ("community surrounded by the mountains")

"Music plays loud every night also in the Evangelic church to reach the whole upper part of the community. In front of the church couple of women are preparing chicharrones, deep fried pork meat. Camilla is an Adventist. She asks me whether I prefer 'canto o canción', listening hymns or songs. We are listening to religious music and speeches from a tape, while baking yucca tortillas." (Fieldnotes, the 5th of May 2016).

In San Pedro, the rhythm of daily life and activities differs from Analco, when it comes to the villagers' night time goings after daily working hours. In San Pedro, a community of around 300 inhabitants as well, there are four different prevalent religions. The most common religion is Pentecostalist Evangelic, which mayor part of the population practices. The three other churches, Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist and Baptist Evangelic, gather only a small group of some dozens of persons at the most. The Pentecostalist church opens its doors every night and people gather there for an hours lasting service of singing, preaching, preying and speaking in tongues. The followers of the Baptist religion meet couple of times a week and the Seventh-Day Adventists all the Saturdays for a whole day lasting scholarly session. Catholic church has very few followers and opens on Sundays, but not on every Sunday. The offices of common goods

and communal agent are located next to the Pentecostalist church and do not open daily, as in Analco. The young secretary of the agent's office, Israel, tells me that the offices are opened maybe "once a month".

The settlement in San Pedro is divided to the two sides of the Tlatepusco river crossing the community and flowing next to the footpath first to Santiago Tlatepusco and then to join the Río Usila in the municipality center. The community is divided into three neighborhoods, *colonias*, based on the origin of the inhabiting families and on the religion that they practice. In the community, there is a preschool and a primary school. Youngsters who continue in a secondary school are sent to study in Santiago, Usila or even as far as to Sierra Juárez. The closest health care center is located in the municipality center, at least five hours walk away. In San Pedro, there is a communal health attendant, an elderly *comunero,* four home pharmacies and a nature healer, *curandero.* There are also two, already elder, midwifes, but the young mothers nowadays are skeptical towards their services and prefer to go and give birth in hospitals, located in Tuxtepec[18].

San Pedro is the remotest agency in the municipality of Usila, being located in 17 kilometers walking distance from the municipality center without a connection of a drivable road. The petition for a road was made around 2008, eight years before my fieldwork. Project was undertaken by the governmental institution CDI (*Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas,* National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples) and since then the road has advanced in a slow schedule, currently reaching almost Santiago Tlatepusco, situated halfway from Usila to San Pedro. Still, as until today, the road is useless, unless a drivable bridge will be construed to cross the river cutting the driveway already in the outskirts of Usila. Don Agustin served *cargo* in the communal road committee for five years and, like other community members, has a pessimistic view on the completion of the project: "*Pues, from kilometer to kilometer… Naaa, it will still delay, este, put it at least some 10 years, that it arrives, pues. If the demand is big, they [the government] attend you quickly. If the demand is small, pues, also it will be like this, little by little. And that's why it has taken a long time*".

[18] In a contradictory way, women are also sceptical towards the hospital services, many of them would prefer to give birth naturally and are suspicious about the generalizing caesarean sections in the city hospitals.

Based on archaeological studies, the settlements in San Pedro Tlatepusco and in its neighbor community Santiago Tlatepusco were founded in 1421 (de Teresa 2011, 46). San Pedro obtained its legal position, *titulo*, in 1817 and I was told that the community used to be a regional municipality center. Don Felipe describes this to me:

"*How people were fighting before! Because, they say that the territory of here, of San Pedro, was marked till Nopalera, till San Felipe de León, till San Antonio Ocote. It was bounded by Valle Nacional. It was huge, grandísimo, the territory of San Pedro. It was a municipality here, sí. And all of these pueblitos were its ranchos, pues.*"

Things changed in the course of the years and the community was abandoned in 1928 for decades after being drowned by a flood. Twenty years later people started to come back to the location. First it was only four families originating from the ancient San Pedro and little by little the community was again inhabited by families coming from different surrounding localities. Until year 1978 new San Pedro was under taxation of its neighbor San Felipe de León and the community recovered its legal position again after 1980, when the petition for common goods office was registered.

The municipality of Usila

The municipality of Usila has its center, *cabecera*, in the slightly bigger village of around 2000 inhabitants of San Felipe Usila (SEDESOL 2010). The municipality counts with 31 localities, smaller indigenous Chinantec communities, being one of the bigger or middle-sized municipalities in the state of Oaxaca (INEGI 2013). The municipality center is located in a distance of 100 kilometers from the district capital, Tuxtepec. There are two public transportation companies operating various times a day this route and a one-way trip takes almost five hours in the curvy road crossing the landscape of the more degraded areas of lower Chinantla stressed by different anthropocentric uses of land: pastoral zones, plantations and artificial water reservoirs, the more urban centers of the remote country side villages, their roads of small enterprises and shops, *mototaxis* and advertisements of political parties and governmental health and aid campaigns painted on the walls. Many times, these slightly bigger villages represent the urbanized and unsustainable counterpart for the people in the communities of CORENCHI.

"*Usila is full of thief*s," is a common say in both Analco and San Pedro. The municipal center is seen as corrupted and people from there are referred as "*mala",* bad, or profit seeking. The villagers from San Pedro avoid walking alone the road from Santiago to Usila, as before "*rateros",* crooks or thieves from Usila, used to be hiding behind the rocks, waiting for the people from remote communities to pass after having claimed their monetary aids or made their shopping. Comparison between the more urbanized lifestyle of Usila and the localities make people from Analco and San Pedro generally to express their pride over the way things are in their own communities. Changes in the lifestyle of *usileños*, the scarce availability of land for basic cultivation and clean water and the more generalized use of agrochemicals are expressed in changes in daily diets. Comparison between the local community and Usila usually leads to discuss "*tortillas de Usila"*, machine made of mazeca instant corn flour, and stalls selling roasted chicken along the main road of the village. "*I don't buy that chicken, it eats aliment, come alimento,"* Cristina tells in San Pedro. She has killed her own chicken, "*pollo criollo",* to prepare a soup. It is common amongst the people of the communities to compare the food in their own locality and Usila by expressing the supremacy of the local food and healthier lifestyle.

"*Here it's not like when arriving to Usila, where there is contamination, right? Like already in Tuxtepec or going to other countries, no. Pure contaminations, pues. Pure smoke,"* Don Agustin reflects on the differences between his own community, San Pedro, and urbanized areas. It is common to compare the close by municipalities, Usila and in the case of Analco also Tlacoatzintepec at the other side of Río Grande, and the communities in terms of environmental care, again, expressing the gratitude for the local conditions. Many times, this comparison goes back to water, one of the most relevant elements of the local ways of life, as later on in this study will be discussed. Contamination of water, by plumbing, garbage or agrochemicals is associated with the neighboring bigger municipality centers, as in the following example from Analco:

"*Abelino tells me, that in the altitude of Analco the river is not yet contaminated. But from the bridge and further on, it already is. Abelino zooms the camera in a white spot in the opposite mountain wall. I've always thought this as a rocky part in the green jungle surrounding the municipality of Tlacoatzintepec, but now, through the lens of the camera, it appeals to be a mass of garbage, an illegal dumb, as Abelino says."* (Fieldnotes, the 5th of April 2016).

1.3. Conservation and governmental programs in Mexico

Mexico is recognized as one of the world's most biodiverse countries (CONABIO 2009). All together there are 176 federally declared protected areas, *Áreas Naturales Protegidas* (CONANP 2016). Since year 2003 it has been possible for the inhabitants of these zones to apply and receive governmental payments for ecosystem services, PES, a program based on the internationally awoken worry over the planet's state addressed in the Rio Conference, 1992, and on the United Nations' definition of the ecosystem services and suggestion of the PES as a way to cope with the local and global problems of environmental destruction and human development (Alatorre-Troncoso 2014, 3; CONANP 2014; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005).

At a federal level, in my opinion, environmental politics and projects are still realized in an ambient of incongruence and uncertainty of their real objectives. In the global environmental politics' scene, Mexico has had an adaptive and participative, even eager role. Year 2016 Mexico hosted the United Nations' conference on biodiversity in Cancún, Yucatán. Mexico has also, as one of the front countries, volunteered to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions[19] by carbon capturing method (GOB 2015). As part of this, United Nations' REDD+, Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, mechanism is to be implemented and the CORENCHI communities also aim to participate[20].

Still, the eager green policies in Mexico have taken place at the same time with the development of a more neoliberal state orientation, accelerated from the 1990's, and by the constitutional reforms of the recent years, allowing more access to the private companies to enter for an example in the energetic sector. Activities of the commercial actors entering with the excuses provided by the global and federal green politics are, as suggested in this study, many times unfavorable to the local communities and against their direct benefit. With the anyway remotely experienced federal legislation and independent commercial actors, like companies, in my experience the inconsistent acts of the state institutions, when on one hand providing environmental and social programs and on the other facilitating the entrance of private companies, create suspicion and feelings

[19] Mexico is one of the world's top countries with the highest CO_2 emissions for its strong dedication to oil and gas industry (IDB 2016).

[20] Specific states for the implementation of the mechanism were chosen in 2016 and Oaxaca was not selected to continue to this second phase yet, see Proceso 2017.

of insecurity in local communities protecting their environment and rights to lands and ways of life. Only couple of months before the United Nations' conference took place in the state of Yucatán, Mexican environmental ministry SEMARNAT (Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales) had admitted a permission to the construction of a hotel complex displacing *manglar*, natural mangrove biodiversity reservoir in the same state[21]. Similar manner, around 2015 in Chinantla SEMARNAT approved without any previous consultation construction of a hydroelectric dam in the conservation zone by a Spanish green tech company. This dam, contrary to all the conservation program requisites, would have affected communities and their communal territories, more so the quality of water, in a wide range. Representatives of the company visited communities of the region, including Analco, with a lot of promises. Gustavo served at the time a high *cargo* in CORENCHI and tells the following:

"*A year ago, more than a year ago, came a company, ENERSI. They presented biologists, I think, and an engineer. They came to the office of the officer, they had a signature for the officer to give them later on a tour by the river side until where it is San Pedro Xochiapam, of the river here. Santiago Tlatepusco, Usila, all this was going to be a canal of water to produce energy. Siii, a microhydroelectric it's called. Pues, the company… I came just when they were talking. The officer was already making them the questions: where they came from and why and what benefits were they bringing. To begin they offered: if there is no hospital, they will put a hospital. If there is no bridge, they will make one. If there is no road, they will make one and if there is already, as we already have, they will make it better by a surface, pavimento. Work for the whole community… They came with a person from Usila, from here, from San Felipe Usila… I said: 'I'm from the Committee of Natural Resources'. And that's when they fell silent and said nothing more… And that's when they doubted a lot, doubted and doubted, ya estee, finally I was asking for their phone number, their e-mail… and nothing, they didn't want to give. They agreed on coming back in 15 days, if they'd be invited by the authorities and we didn't invite them… We went to the proper SEMARNAT and to the proper CONANP… And that's where, ahora sí, the proper SEMARNAT, CONANP said that this permission that, ahora sí, ENERSI had, will be renounced.*"

[21] See La Jornada 2016.

To the remote community of San Pedro, the company representatives never went. But the recent incident is known to the whole zone and have left suspicion amongst its people. Inhabitants of the communities are tended to think that the company is looking for a new opportunity to enter the zone. When I went back to Chinantla in fall 2016, *comuneros* of San Pedro Tlatepusco were carrying long pipes on their back from Usila. This was part of a state (CDI) sponsored project to construe a deep and a drainage system for the waste waters in two communities of the region, including San Pedro. Villagers of San Pedro, not consulted before the implementation of the project, were anxious about the insecurity, whether the project would affect the water quality of the river. They had entered in a dispute with their neighboring community of Santiago, claiming them to renounce the project that SEMARNAT, again, had approved. Some people in the community were thinking that the company would have sent the drainage in order to ruin the quality of the water and this way justify construction of the dam. During this second visit to San Pedro, engineers of the drainage system were in the community as well. Pancho looked gloomily towards the community cottage, where the engineers were staying. "*They are not going to tell you anything, they are already educated for that*," he said with a load of suspicion in his voice. The same suspicion was also addressed towards the candidates of different parties during the electoral period, spring 2016. Gossips of certain candidates receiving money and cooperating with the Spanish company were circulating.

The intention to put the hydroelectric dam without any previous consultation left the communities a suspicion towards the company and towards decisions made by governmental institutions such as environmental ministry SEMARNAT and local municipal politicians. But private companies are benefitting of the results of the conservation program in other ways as well. Clean, conserved water resources from the communities of CORENCHI flow down the river Usila to the city of Tuxtepec and are there enjoyed by the big, water consuming factories of the industrial town (GDF 2017). Even so, during my fieldwork it came out clearly that the communities feel of being blamed for their agricultural practices, "*how badly we are conserving*," as Don Agustin put it in the community of San Pedro. With these unsustainable practices people of the communities refer to the system of shifting cultivation. People express feelings of injustice for making the farmers to feel guilty, also in the conservation discourses, over

this centuries-practiced method, when the real contaminators appear to be the big companies.

After the harvest in the communities of Analco and San Pedro *acahuales*, cultivation zones, are left to rest around 10 years' time before being exposed to shifting agriculture technique again, contrary to other circumstances where the same parcels are cleaned yearly or after a couple of years' rest. This is how the delegates and local technicians of CORENCHI in the community of San Pedro comment on the topic:

"*We are making an effort and they're not. We have estee… The struggle, lucha, has been through our organization CORENCHI. That has touched upon the theme, pues… And now we are already noticing that have it said, they're putting the blame on the farmers. Because they burn rozo. But that's not contamination for us. We only burn once a year… Daily, daily, day and night, where there is a factory, pues… The challenge of CORENCHI is to have more support from part of the governmental dependencies. All of them are the ones laying gases, pues no. The ones, who are contaminating more. That they'd know the compromise that we have engaged in with the conservation. That we'd be more recognized by the organization of big enterprises. For an example the beer factory, cervezera, and the function of the area of electricity.*"

The new international, federal and national level green and commercial trends and politics have included local communities into complicated global and, of course, local processes that provide the communities with new threats, but also possibilities. The effort of the organization CORENCHI and the Oaxacan partner NGO has been to produce hydroelectricity for the communities' own consumption in Santa Cruz and el Barrio. This initiative was still on the level of thought during my fieldwork in 2016 and was subjected only to these upper communities. I discussed the theme with CORENCHI representatives in San Pedro:

Me: *Here you would also like to have that?*

Maurilio, vice officer of common goods: "*Yes, we would! To not to pay for that [electricity]. And doing so, that the government would know, that here we also have knowledge on how to defend our well-being, no.*"

1.4. Structure of the thesis

In the following chapter 2., I will describe the ethnographic fieldwork conducted for this thesis. In the subsequent analytical chapters, I will connect the findings of this fieldwork to theoretical questions related to indigenous autonomy and environmental protection combining central studies from the fields of environmental and political anthropology with more regionally focused Latin American and Mexican anthropological accounts. In chapter 3., State control, I will approach anthropological conversations on the relation of small communities with the state and present ideas of James Scott (1998) on rough state simplifications to analyse communal entities in relation to the nation state. I will further reflect on how these power structures are present in the context of my study and situate the entrance of the conservation program as part of the local historical process of social aid programs. In chapter 4., Visions on nature, by presenting ideas of Alicia Barabas (2004, 2006) on "sacred ethnoterritoriality" and views of Stuart Kirsch (2006) on "indigenous analysis" I will reflect on how the entrance of the governmental conservation program and other syncretic phenomena have influenced the ways in which people experience nature and environmental changes. I will also look upon the influences on visions on wellbeing, necessity and living "in a zone of high marginalization". In the last analytical chapter 5., Death to the state, contrary to the simple contrapositioning of state and civil society, I will discuss the ways in which autonomy and self-determination can be construed in relations to different actors involved in the current global environmental politics. I will consider the new dependencies of environmental actors, such as NGO's, created through the seemingly empowering ongoing political trends towards communitarian environmental protection. Ideas of "relational autonomy" of such Latin American anthropologists as Astrid Ulloa (2011) and Héctor Díaz-Polanco (2009) and of dependences of James Ferguson (2015) and China Scherz (2014) are pertinent here.

All of the analytical chapters concentrate on the creation and recreation of the constantly negotiated and intermingled processes of communal autonomy and control. However, as the above presented structure suggests: this thesis does not have a frame of a single anthropological conversation in which it would take part. This outcome of my time spent in the Chinantec communities of Analco and San Pedro is notably ethnography driven and my theoretical framings are following the themes that rose as significant during my fieldwork. For my ethnographic focus and unwillingness to exlude descriptions

and citations from my informants, the outcome of this study is extense in legth for a master's thesis. Still, I consider that documentation of these local experiences is the most important input of my study.

2. METHODOLOGY

"*The journey. We were not robbed on our way from San Pedro to Usila, even I saw Lucio getting more alert, when passing the boundaries, colindancía, of Usila and Santiago Tlatepusco. The journey in an old bus, Lobo, from Usila to the city of Tuxtepec is heated. From Tuxtepec I take a night bus to Mexico City. The bus zigzags through old industrial zones and stops for undetermined times on small streets that in the darkness could be anywhere in Mexico. We arrive to Mexico City before sunrise andd the driver leaves me in front of one of the main central stations, Tapo, refusing to pay for the entrance. I feel dizzy for being in the city again and understand the totality of the difference of the context into which I have arrived from Chinantla.*" (Fieldnotes, the 5th of June 2016).

…

"*We had agreed on turns to carry my huge backpack. I am quite sure that my turn, from Santa Cruz Tepetotutla till San Antonio del Barrio, was the shortest one. At four am, we sat in front of the community shop. CORENCHI delegates bought some cookies and Coca-Cola for the road to Analco. We walked in line in the darkness with our flashlights showing the narrow road twirling the mountainside. Each time that my companions heard my shoes slipping for the wet leaves or rocks covering the road, they would immediately turn around with a scared expression in their face. Even in the darkness whenever I could turn my head up from my feet, I could see the shadows of the great mountains surrounding us. When the day started to clear, clouds moved up towards mountain tops, revealing the greenness of the landscape. In the evening, clouds would spread to embrace the forest again.*

In Santa Cruz, I had seen a bat flying around, close to the roof of the community house, where we slept couple of hours before our early departure in order to arrive Analco 'at a good hour'. When now lifting my face from my floundering feet, there was one almost on my face. 'You got scared? Take!' And I was given a leaf that is supposed to calm one down, smelling it was enough. 'How do you call it?' After a moment of thinking, I was given an answer: 'Espanto, fright.' On our way, we collected other eatable wild plants, tepejilote and hierbamora, typical for the region. After my second bat observation, my companions told me that actually, what I thought were bats, were small birds that usually move during the night time.

…Suddenly we stopped after couple of hours of walking. 'We have arrived,' I was told happily by one of my companions. 'Really?' I was surprised as I had been told that the walking distance from Santa Cruz to Analco would be closer to 10 hours in the mountain

roads. 'Yes, till the halfway.'" (Fieldnotes, the 14th of February 2016, on our way to Analco).

2.1. Methods for data collecting

Besides the objectives connected to the thematic and theoretical questions, one of my aims was to put to a test the classical anthropological data collection method of participant observation, keen partaking in the daily life of local people in order to obtain a holistic and at the same time deep understanding of the studied context and to write an ethnographically oriented study outcome. In this study, I combine these classical field methods with the more recently risen tendencies towards activist anthropology and political ecology, which had pertained to my non-academic endeavours before the fieldwork. Soon enough after starting my study, I understood that besides putting these methods to a test, more than else I had put myself to a test, a situation described in any anthropology textbook considering ethnographic fieldwork. In this chapter, I will discuss the practicalities of my field study in Chinantla and the advantages and problematics of anthropological participative study methods in this specific field context and as part of politically oriented environmental study.

I started my fieldwork in February 2016 with a two months period of time in the community of San Antonio Analco, after which I returned to the city of Oaxaca de Juárez just to go back to Chinantla in the last week of April for the following couple of days of "*feria",* festival of cultural and biological diversity of the Chinantlan, more precisely CORENCHI, communities organized in co-operation and under the surveillance of Geoconservación. In the beginning of May 2016, I took the road from Santa Cruz to San Pedro, again accompanied by local CORENCHI delegates on their way back home and, this time, also in the presence of another visiting investigator, Xóchitl, from the university of Cornell, the United States. Xóchitl spent the first two weeks of my fieldwork in San Pedro, concluding a study about traditional cooking knowledge and food sovereignty in the Chinantla region[22]. My expiring Mexican visa forced me to leave San Pedro the 4th of June, a day before the Oaxacan governor's and municipal presidents' election, also a

[22] See Perrey 2017.

tactical choice in order to avoid road blocks and expected confrontations in the municipal centre.

I took the road to Analco again in October, now with two Mexican biologists working in the beehive project. On this second hike, in the tropical day time heat, the road was in a good condition after a recent *tequio*, communal cleaning work. In this occasition I spent only couple of days in Analco and headed then to San Pedro. The purpose of my two weeks of stay was to say goodbye to my friends in Chinantla before returning to Helsinki, but also to equalize the 2 months' time that I spent in each community. As later realized, this does not make my findings more even in other respects. Participant observation including hundreds of informal conversations as my main research method resulted in some respects "random data". This means that I might know something about Analco, but do not have certainty of the same detail in San Pedro and the other way around.

Going to practicalities, my participant observation in both communities included taking part in the daily activities such as going to *campo,* cultivation fields, carrying fire wood and bananas on my back, baking tortillas and embroiling *servietas* that are all part of typical women's everyday tasks. The colliding roles of being a woman studying seemingly and stereotypically masculine themes will be discussed more in depth later in this chapter. Jumping out of the more female sphere of communal life, I observed eagerly local and municipal political life. The in-official campaigning for the municipal president's office started soon after my arrival to Analco and I joined the villagers on early Sunday mornings, when we packed ourselves tide in the cars sent by political parties to take us to campaign events held in the municipal center.

Due to my early interest towards participatory democracy, I tried to observe the local and communal political life. In Analco different reunions and assemblies were held more often than in San Pedro, almost daily, and I joined these events until the point that the agent's secretary, passing the list of attending *comuneros*, started to call my name as well. I realized soon enough that the focus of my study could not be entirely on the local level of carrying out communal governance for my in-ability to understand Chinantec language, a big restriction of my study. For the Spanish words (words without a translation to Chinantec or institutional terms or names of different programs and projects) cutting the discourses of the communal reunions, I always, more or less, had a clue of what we were discussing. Still, I could not understand the whole content of

communal reunions. Same applies to the religious events in which I participated in San Pedro, where the ceremonies of Evangelic churches were held in the local language with some exceptions[23]. I stayed in Analco during the Catholic eastern celebration, *Semana Santa.* These ceremonies were held in Spanish language and in the presence of a visiting Catholic seminary student.

As the focus of my study is in the communal conservation project, I participated in all formal conservation events taking place during my stay. In Analco, this meant duties concerning beekeeping and participation in the trainings held in the community. I got to participate in two general assemblies of CORENCHI, whole-day-lasting sessions in Spanish to plan petitions for funds and up-coming events under the guidance and control of the environmental NGO Geoconservación. I also participated in the annual festivities of Chinantec cultures and biodiversity taking place in the communities of Santa Cruz and el Barrio. In this *feria,* the whole three-day package including accommodation, food and transportation costs around 1500 Mexican pesos[24]. Most part of the visitors come from governmental institutions financing the project of the four communities. Also, students and journalists writing about the region gather to the event. Activities of the "3rd *feria"* in 2016, included displays of the local biodiversity, cuisine, dances and handicrafts, lectures and speeches about government financed conservation projects. Many competitions between the four communities took place during the festivities in the display of local diversity, cuisine and photography. All of this was presented in front of a long table of institutional representatives and some members of the Geoconservación and CIIDIR investigation unit staff. In the night, everyone gathered to community's basketball field to drink *mezcal* and to dance to tropical music.

During my stay in the community of Analco, I slept in an old storage building, *bodega,* at the very lowest part of the community construed in the mountain side and on the distance of almost 80 steps of the steep staircase from *cancha*, basketball field and the center for communal life. *Bodega,* "house of Raita", is a common lodging place for outside visitors in Analco. In several occasions, I shared the space with others: biologists coming to the community as part of the conservation program, a journalist planning to write a reportage about the communities and persons from the upper community of Santa

[23] In the 20th century during the Protestant conversion of rural Mexico, missionaries started to hold ceremonies in native languages and to translate the Bible to them unlike the Catholic church (Friedlander 2006, 118).
[24] Around 80 eur at the time.

Cruz, taking a rest on their way to the municipality center of Usila. In San Pedro, a group of Italian voluntary workers was sent to the community around 2010, and as part of their architecture studies, they designed and construed a communal cottage. In San Pedro, I was in many occasions invited by several families to go and stay in their households. People said that they felt sorry that I needed to pay a charge of my stay in the cottage (no more 100 pesos[25] for a night).

Even though I am aware that in anthropological participant observation it is considered in many ways advantageous to stay with a local family, I still refused the offers and stayed in the cottage first with Xóchitl and then with the local schoolteachers. This way I wanted to prevent creating otherwise common disputes in the community. Earlier, common contradictions between families and groups were already present in both of the communities[26]. In my consideration, these might have been reinforced by my choice of staying with a certain family. In San Pedro, visiting biology students and investigators were not always appreciated for their choices to eat or spent time with only certain families. Usually with each of my moves in the communities, I needed to think on how that would affect the complex communal dynamics. During the holy week of Easter in Analco, the tradition is to take the family down to the river bench next to the road to swim and, possibly, prepare *caldo de piedra*, a typical fish soup from the municipal center Usila[27]. Consequently, I found myself in the middle of an old family dispute, as one family wanted to take me to the river with them and another one, brother of the first, disagreed by saying that I was supposed to eat at his house that day. In result, I decided not to go to the river at all during the Easter week, but instead stayed in the community. In both of the communities, there is no way of buying and preparing one's own food. I was determined by the office of common goods (Analco) and by the cottage committee (San Pedro), with whom I could go and eat daily. In the choices of lodging and eating I thus tried to respect local customs and hospitality.

The other research methods used as complementary are semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews, 10 in total. All of the interviews in the studied communities are made with male *comuneros* of ages between 20 and 70 years. I did four interviews in each community. In Analco, three out of four interviewees have or have had *cargo* in

[25] About 5 eur at the time of the study.

[26] Inner-community disputes will be explained more in the chapter on *usos y costumbres.*

[27] A soup prepared typically in a rocky hole of the river bench. All the ingredients, raw fish and fresh vegetables, are mixed and a hot rock is put into the natural bowl cooking the soup.

CORENCHI. In San Pedro, I did three semi-structured interviews with individual community members. Two of the interviewees had previously had *cargo* in CORENCHI. With Xóchitl, my colleague from the United States, we did one group interview with the four current CORENCHI delegates and two local technicians. This arrangement was appropriate in order to save people's time from answering similar type of questions in two sequent occasions. We had by then also noticed that even we were very much welcomed and people chattered willingly with us, there was a slight reluctance of participating in more structured, taped interviews based on an insecurity of one's worthiness more than on unwillingness to speak on certain themes. Especially people of younger age or lower *cargos* were doubtful, if the presented questions would "be difficult" or something "that they would not have knowledge of".

As the recorded interviews did not feel the most comfortable method of research neither for the interviewed *comuneros* nor for the interviewer, it seems reasonable to combine these with more informal conversations. These methods seem to complement very well and provide different types of data from different persons. I did the more formal interviews, concerning the theme of conservation with persons that were participating in CORENCHI during my stay or had had an active participation previously and their relation to the topic was then obvious. I also asked the villagers in both of the localities with whom I could go and speak about the topic of conservation. This way women were excluded from the tape-recorded interviews, as in the communities of Analco and San Pedro women do not participate with *cargos* of CORENCHI. Still, in the two communities both women's and men's ideas and views contribute importantly to the outcome of this study as I conversed more in-officially with both female and male community member of all ages.

It must be notified that all my interviews and informal conversations were held in Spanish, which is not the mother tongue of neither the informants nor the interviewer. I only interviewed community members, who were comfortable with speaking in Spanish. This way the points of view of the eldest community members, *ancianos*, who probably have a lot of relevant knowledge, were left outside the scope of my study. Male *comuneros* around their 60 and 70 years of age were still very much able and eager to discuss in Spanish with me.

- *“Ne¹e quó³?”*

To *cancha*.

- *“Ka¹a íí³?”*

Sí, I ate *tortilla*.

Where are you going? Did you eat (*tortilla*)? Especially elder women are less used to speak in Spanish with visitors. I still made some caring friendship with elderly women, with whom I used to have routinely my daily conversation of where I had gone and what I had eaten (pretty much all I could say in Chinantec), when passing by their houses. In several occasions, Spanish speaking daughters were of help to discuss with elder women.

The two other tape-recorded interviews are conducted with persons, who have had an influence during the early years of the conservation project in Chinantla. I was keen to understand this crucial period of time in the 1990’s better in order to seek answers to my research questions. With this objective, I interviewed a state official working at the time in the Mexican environmental ministry. I had heard him giving a speech in *feria* and later in the fall we saw each other in two instances for my initiative and the official lent me a set of otherwise unavailable bibliography of studies made in Chinantla at the time. The other interview I made with the first president of CORENCHI from the community of Santa Cruz Tepetotutla. We knew each other already from my first visit to Santa Cruz in 2014 and have chattered on different topics in several other occasitions as well.

Many choices during my fieldwork, such as where to sleep and eat and with whom to record were based on a stance of not wanting to do harm or provoke contradictions inside the communities. Villagers, especially in San Pedro that has ultimately been more studied by fellows from study institutes co-operating with the conservation program, have not always been happy with these visits. I was told that the investigators come and go with their paid guides and “do not even greet the others”, they shared benefits unequally between the villagers or, what was the worst: they never came back. I have agreed upon taking the results and a Spanish translation of this thesis back to both of the communities, where the copies of previous studies, the ones that are returned there, are held at the common goods’ office. Before starting my fieldwork in San Pedro, I was affirmed by the community authorities that it would not be enough to send a copy of my thesis through

Geoconservación, I would be expected to visit the community by myself again and bring back the results of the study.

2.2. On anthropology and critical environmental ethnography

In this study, I combine the anthropological participative and ethnographic methods with tools for critical environmental and political investigation. Since the 1970's political ecology has offered a common theoretical and practical framework for environmental anthropologists to place their, usually, critique towards the current world order in its natural and social spheres. Aletta Biersack defines "the theoretical reorientation" central for political ecology as a nexus between symbolic and material factors, critique of separation between nature and culture, an analysis of global and local processes, interactions of practice and theory with the centrality of social differences and inequalities. A set of consequences follow from these theoretical and practical frames, for an example the centrality of an analysis of power structures and criticism of these. Power structures are studied at a local and a global, transnational level, and studies are situated both in time and place. Political ecology seeks to uncover motivations behind the operation of different actors and how their activities justify or challenge the current world order and political structures. (Biersack 2006, 3-5, 26).

Sharp in their social critique, anthropologists dedicated to activism have acted under the concept of political ecology, when doing stand-taking, environmental study. Anthropologists can step into the role of an activist during their fieldwork, fighting for the rights of the studied people or outside their actual field contexts. This kind of activist anthropology has been done by Stuart Kirsch (2007, 305), who during his fieldwork in Papua New Guinea and in the international environmental forums has taken part in communities' battle against an Australian mining company. Kirsch (2006, 11) defines his study in Papua New Guinea as a hybrid of scholarly work and activism. Like Kirsch, Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995, 420) has taken the stance as political activist both at the local level of her field sites and widely through her ethnographic writings, which she describes as "sites of resistance". During her fieldwork in Brazil, she became a "*companheira",* an active participant of local political campaigns (ibid., 410-11). Scheper-Hughes (1995, 409) and Kirsch (2006, 187) see it as an ethical and moral responsibility of anthropologists to be involved, when witnessing political or concrete

violence in their sites of study. This active anthropologist is not an outside observer and permissive "cultural relativist" to any act of violence taking place in the name of local culture and customs (Scheper-Hughes 1995, 409-10).

My original concern about doing ethnographic study in a small community on a politically oriented subject was that my own perceptions and engagements, also political and probably not similar to the ideas that local people have, would affect the course and outcomes of my investigation. I did not want to end up proving my own political ideas and ideals through someone else's experience that might not be corresponding at all. I had participated in political and environmental movements in Mexico during my bachelor's degree exchange studies and in my hometown Helsinki. In Helsinki, I had taken part in environmental grassroots movements promoting alternative productions and more collective and ecological city culture. In Mexico, the activism did not come out for the necessities of the fieldwork or for the request of my informants, as described by Kirsch and Scheper-Hughes. My first experience of living in Mexico was not that of an anthropologist doing her fieldwork, but more that of a university student seeing myself at that time not as a complete outsider, but as part of the reality and phenomena taking place around me. My classmates at the faculty of *Filosofía y Lettras*, the faculty with the most anarchist appearance with its painted walls, occupied spaces and continuous *paros*, students' strikes, invited me to join demonstrations, movements and encounters. The first time this happened, there was a need for a Finnish interpreter in an encounter with financing from my own home country. This way I ended up getting to know a local, environmental resistance movement in the state of Veracruz against a mine contaminating water resources and through my contacts in the movement I also eventually became to know Geoconservación as well.

I think that, despite my earlier anxiety or maybe because of that, I did not find reason for my worries any more during the fieldwork. While doing fieldwork I tried to avoid any straight political manifests, even I discussed these themes when taken up by my informants. For the electoral turbulence that marked the time of my stay, I was in some occasions asked to witness political stands and to present them by myself. In the later situations, it was easy for me to refuse. That was something that I had thought through before starting the fieldwork. As I knew that there are various differing opinions present inside the communities, I did not want to turn anyone against me by supporting the endeavours of some. An example from the field is presented below.

We had gathered in front of the common goods office in San Pedro to listen to the presentations of the candidates, *planilla*, of the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) party. Candidates were not well received in the community of San Pedro even though one of them, an old municipal president, stood up and told everyone how happy it made him to be in San Pedro again. Israel, the young secretary from the agent's office, stood up and told that the candidate's expression reminded him of a song "*dichoso entre los pobres"* (successful in between all the poor people). It turned out that the candidate had earlier promised 40 tons of cement and two barrels for each household and had failed in keeping his promise. He had also failed to deliver other already paid orders of materials and it was said that he had since then changed his domicile in Usila and did not open his door anymore when people from the municipal agencies came to look for their orders. Encouraged by his companion's claims, Arturo stood up and confessed having received well calculated 38 tons and one barrel of the promised amount. Don Agustin, who had refused to stand up to support *planilla*, came to pull my sleeve: "*Speak for your village*."

I did not know how to explain myself well and told that I could not take sides in front of all, not everyone might agree on me doing this and I did not want to offend anyone. I said, it was more important that the villagers themselves would use their chance to express themselves, as they knew the situation better and I would not even vote in the election. Visiting politicians anyway paid me too much attention, as my appearance of an outsider in the remote communities awoke curiosity from their part. I knew well that Don Agustin had his own political commitments as well, as each one of the community members. I did not want to take sides in the electoral competition, seeing actually all of the parties as corrupted and exploitive. I had also become more conscious of my position in this after the candidate of PRI party had become suspicious on my stay in the municipal localities for having accompanied a son of Gilberto, *comunero* from Analco, when he wanted to discuss with the candidate on the selection of party's *planilla.*

- *We want translation!* Gilberto screamed in the frontline of people that had gathered to the electoral event, himself protesting against the selection process of *planilla*.
- *We want them to present themselves… This is no democracy*! Gilberto went on.

Couple of months later, when PRI's *planilla* visited San Pedro just before the electoral day, the candidate of the party reminded me of the happened: "*Our planilla was selected democratically, as señorita here can confirm*".

In this scholarly work, I intent to not put my own ideas, result of many things, including environmental and political activism, into the context of my study any more than doing fieldwork and writing an ethnography is subjective in any given situation. Instead, I keep my eyes and mind open for realities and solutions distinct from my own ideals and ideas of autonomy, as will be seen in the last chapter of this thesis considering autonomy construed in relations. I still do not close my eyes to political violence or injustice witnessed during my fieldwork, as Scheper-Hughes suggests, but present these in a way that will not put my informants in an uncomfortable situation nor in danger in their localities. It must be noted that Mexico has been ultimately recognized as one of the most dangerous countries for environmental activists and territorial defenders to operate and in official listings as the second most violent country after currently wartime Syria[28]. These figures speaking of the occurring insecurity make it even more prevalent to not put informants under any danger of being threatened. I agree with Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995, 418) in her argument that deciding what to study and what to write or not write about are already political and moral choices in the end and acts of solidarity to different causes, ways of "speaking for one's village".

2.3. Challenges and ethical considerations

I did not find it impossible to conduct reflexive study on a political topic for my own previous and current political opinions. But I find it problematic to do critical study suggested by the frame of political ecology by using anthropological participant observation as the main method of study. When I was still in the field, I ended up being quite sure that these two methodological choices, critical environmental study or political ecology and participant observation, leading to deep friendship with the studied people, should not be combined in a way that I was doing. I do not argue that by participant observation one would not acquire knowledge that is profitable for critical study. All the contrary: the insight that I gained through living and participating in the daily life of the communities and through all the informal conversations, would not have been gained by any other means. But the knowledge acquired in a context of unequal power relations and presenting of this do not seem always of profit for the studied people. Such knowledge presents studied people in a way that might not always seem flattering or positive.

[28] See La Jornada 2017; Vanguardia 2017.

Obviously, realizing this did not make me feel happy during my fieldwork, as I was treated so well in the communities. I became close with the villagers and they invited me to know some intimate parts of their life and of their social and natural setting. For an example Pedro, who showed me the altar that he had spared from Christmas, images of virgin of Guadalupe put on the wall. Or Lilia and small Agustina. Lilia almost never spoke to me, when we were in the community. One day she and her nephew Agustina took me with them to a place in the upper river bench, where hundreds of orange and black coloured butterflies, "*monarca chinanteca",* flew downwards, towards the community, where *tlatepuzqueños* would come together to the river to swim and wash their clothes and dishes in the round rocks.

Still, as I had already put myself into this, I think that the best appreciation for the hospitality and kindness of the people in these two communities is not to present an idealized picture without any present contradictions, but to give an insight of the things "as they are", meaning as I experienced them during my limited stay and for my background and theoretical studies of the subject. I think this is also the best way of giving "any profit" with my account (as this was in many occasions questioned by others and by myself) by leaving a historical account of one period of time in these two Chinantec localities and by contributing to the wider, globally ongoing conversations on nature protection and indigenous peoples' rights.

Study amongst indigenous communities

".. *And all the medias would say that a European woman was stabbed with a jungle knife by Indians*." I was accompanied by two Mexican biologists on our walk to San Antonio Analco on my second trip to Chinantla in fall 2016. I had commented on my bad skills of using machete and on people's reluctance to let me hold one. Besides this sarcastic comment by one of the biologists, in the communities I was not addressed differently for being a foreigner. Most certainly, I was not Chinantec, but neither was I treated differently from Mexican students, who had visited the communities. In the end, we were all "from outside" and the differences between my *tierra*, home country, and Mexico were not clear to the community members. I was for an example many times asked, what people then ate if there was no corn. Community members were also many times worried that I would use money for my accommodation or food, as I was a student

and so had "my own *lucha*, struggle". On the other hand, Mexican project managers were received differently from students, because of the possible profits and resources they had to share.

Before heading to the field, I was concerned almost solely with questions, of whether it would be possible to do politically engaged, but not imposing study. Even though I had planned to do my study in an indigenous context in the first place, I saw my topic more as one of environmental anthropology and politics than of indigenous studies. The fact hit me to the face through discussions that I had with one of the young biologists working in Geoconservación. Biologist himself was from Mexico City and had moved to Oaxaca to work in the CORENCHI communities, close to the villages from where his own family originally had migrated to the federal capital. We met the first time during my stay in Analco that received regular visits of biologists from Geoconservación as part of the beekeeping project, and became friends. In the night of the Patron Saint's festivities, after *feria,* we sat in the loft of the communal house of Santa Cruz Tepetotutla. Me and Xóchitl were soon about to leave with San Pedro's delegates. "*I don't tell you [foreign anthropologists] to go back home*…" Biologist started and recommended a book, an ethnography written in the 1970's by Judith Friedlander, at the time a young anthropologist from the United States.

In the first edition of her thesis[29], *Being Indian in Hueyapan* (1975), Friedlander goes to live a year in an indigenous community in the state of Morelos. She concludes her early account of the book by questioning the usefulness of western anthropologists to do fieldwork in remote communities of so called third world countries. She argues that one's scholarly interests should reflect clearly our political commitments, which studying indigenous peoples of Mexico was not for her at the time, for the contributions of these type of studies to the maintenance of unequal and discriminative conditions in which Mexican indigenous peoples live. (Friedlander 2006 [1975], 179.) In Oaxaca and for this surprising literature recommendation by, in some sense, an informant, I understood that the ethical question I should present to myself was not only the one of Scheper-Hughes, about if politically committed study could be done. It should also be asked, who could do this type of study.

[29] The second edition was published in 2006. In this edition Friedlander disproves her 30 years earlier conclusions suggesting that western anthropologists should not do fieldwork in so called third world countries.

"*No, but the people from here have more head than those, who come from outside also. Or there are some that come from outside, I don't know, what they'd know. When here people know more, I think,"* Ernesto from the community of San Pedro is talking about planting *jicama*, so called Mexican turnip, but the citation is reflective and informative in a wider sense as well. Aletta Biersack (2006, 26) sees the method of political ecology with its scope on power relations in a large scale from local to global level as a "decolonizing" method inside social and political sciences. Stuart Kirsch (2006, 185) argues that as anthropologists we can bring "restricted discourses available for wider audiences" for our privileged positions to witness these and similarly Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995, 418) sees ethnography as "an act of solidarity". In the study of indigenous communities of Oaxaca, a decolonizing wave rose in the 1980's, a decade after Judith Friedlander (2006 [1975], 190) felt pressure from part of her Mexican colleagues for working as a foreign anthropologist in their country. Indigenous intellectuals, such as Floriberto Díaz and Jaime Martínez, left their communities and started to speak in the name of self determination, which also at least partially left behind the concepts, theories and definitions used in the academy to describe indigenous communities (Recondo 2007, 98-107). This movement was especially strong in the Zapotec regions of Sierra Juárez and Sierra Sur (coinciding with an autonomous forest movement) and in the Mixe mountain region, all of these being closer to Oaxaca de Juárez.

In Chinantla there has not been a comparable movement of ownership in defining indigeneity nor over the forest resources. It must be notified that this movement started by indigenous intellectuals in the 1980's and culminating in the creation of the term "*comunalidad"* to describe indigenous forms of organization is in itself a discursive notion, risen from a certain historical and social context. In this respect, I do agree with Aletta Biersack in the decolonizing character of the frame offered by political ecology, and with the later critique of Judith Friedlander (2006 [1975], 192-195) towards solely Mexican, also discursive and contextualized anthropology of 1980's with "less distance to romantized images" of indigenousness. I also agree with Don Pedro Osorio, the first president of CORENCHI from the community of Santa Cruz Tepetotutla, in his suggestion, similar to the one made by Kirsch about presenting restricted discourses: "*At least there in your hoods, rincones, estee hopefully you'd be able to let people know these spaces. To speak a little about these spaces and when it [the thesis] reaches the hands of the readers, they will know, that there is a village… With all the will to stay alive, with*

all the will to work for the development of its communities and to keep alive those proper spaces."

"*These are communities that you need to access through an organization*," I was told by a biologist visiting the community of Analco from Mexico City. It must be noticed that I gained my entrance to study the communities of CORENCHI through my contact to the environmental NGO Geoconservación and this might have facilitated the acceptance of my stay and my study. In San Pedro, the community had decided a bit earlier to not to accept students so easily anymore. I was still assured by the responsible of the community cottage and one of my first contacts in San Pedro, Santiago, that my investigation would probably be accepted by the assembly: "They already received the money for conservation," as the monetary aid received for conservation is commonly called. I had been told by the manager of Geoconservación that it might be problematic to enter to study in San Pedro. The comment of Santiago reveals a contradiction in the ways that the environmental organization and the community see the relation between the two. Whereas the NGO is on alert with San Pedro, community members do feel moral responsibility to accept proposals related to the conservation program.

I was also told by a biologist, sending her students to the community of San Pedro that people would expect me to offer some kind of a benefit for the community. Later I learned that one of the reasons for the assembly's decision to not accept so many investigators any more was that biologists had been giving monetary benefits, which had been divided corruptly to only some community members. Unlike program managers, I was not expected to leave monetary benefits. This might be because I was seen as any other young, Mexican student with limited resources. It might also be for the contradictory feelings towards money prevalent in the communities. Especially in San Pedro money and its entrance to the community were related to entering bad ideas as well. Hospitality was generally seen as a question of honour and many people invited me to visit their houses. When I started to do fieldwork in San Pedro, the officer of common goods gave me the advice: "*In some houses you can leave a bit money for food, but majority won't ask or want it*." And, proudly: "*In my house you won't pay for food ever*." People did not seem to like if benefits were given, but they were not divided equally. This was reflected also on San Pedro's agent's public refusal to gather a list of accredited voters and to divide the meat, sent by political parties as the final step of the electoral campaign, to only these accredited people.

"*Assembly in San Pedro. We present our work in front of the assembly. Comuneros have a heated conversation in Chinantec. In the end Don Agustin stands up and the conversation turns out to be about the question of food. Don Agustin tells that we are very much welcome to the community, but we would need to adapt to the diet. Later I understand that all the conversation was because a couple of years ago a group of Italian voluntary workers came to construe the communal cottage. Funny enough, these Italians had troubled the villagers by refusing to eat anything else than 'sopa', pasta and tomato."* (Fieldnotes, the 5th of May 2016).

Other considerations: on gender

Here I will discuss a classical issue of gender on ethnographic study. As I had lived and studied in Mexico already before my research, the question of gender was something that I had not prepared myself from beforehand based on my earlier experiences. As silly as it sounds, being in a country commonly recognized as "*machista*", male dominated, in my earlier circles amongst university students, I did not face this as problematic and would not have guessed that my own gendered appearance would become a denominating factor during my fieldwork and in its outcomes. This has been earlier proposed by Liina-Maija Quist (2016), who has done ethnographic fieldwork within fisheries in the state of Tabasco, Mexico. Quist (2016, 27) illustrates how the categorization of the other is not only parallel, but also informants form ideas about the ethnographer. These ideas can be gendered or even sexualized and they can confirm (or why not also deny) certain stereotypes, when women study masculine subjects in a society of highlighted gender roles (ibid., 33). I think that the way my fieldwork formed and how people got to know me during my fieldwork were in big part influenced by my gender, which operated at the same time as restricting and permissive. Earlier investigations in San Pedro have taken up the same consideration. Escalante Lara and Romero Julián (1998, 11) note the difference in acquiring knowledge through acceptance to participate in a different set of activities depending of the researcher's gender.

On one hand, I did not have access to mainly men involving activities. Neither was I ever referred to as "the anthropologist", unlike male biologists, engineers, accountants and candidates, who were commonly addressed by their titles. Yet, I was sometimes, especially by people who did not know me well, referred as "*señorita"* emphasizing other

feminine attributes besides my gender, such as marital status and age. In the community of Analco, with the active social and communal participation of younger male *comuneros*, I became sometimes object of jokes about marrying me to some of the community's available bachelors or for my appearance, like when the officer of common goods declared that he wants to get himself a butterfly tattoo as well. The community car driver, grinning, would put a pop song *María*, a reference to my biblical second name carrying several images of the Catholic and Latin-American prototype of women, to play when I sat to the car bench. Even the Catholic seminar student found it entertaining to make public jokes about my dancing skills in the Easter mess. This seminar student had decided to revive an old tradition of Easter ball, a custom prohibited in Analco some decades earlier by Catholic priests. Still, despite the sometimes until irritating jokes and the real understandings (different from the ones I was used to) of gender behind these, being a woman made the other women and their points of view, otherwise dismissed in the recorded interviews, more available to me. Also, the fact that I went to San Pedro with Xóchitl, who studied traditional cooking, made community's women to invite me to their homes to cook and chatter with them even long after Xóchitl was gone.

When inviting us, me and a couple of visiting male biologists, to his birthday party, I heard the agent saying: "Bring that Diego here". It was obvious that this was a party for men. We went into the room where the agent (in the middle, in his hammock with a beer in his hand) and couple of other men were drinking. The only woman in the room was the agent's sister, who was holding a baby and sitting in a small chair in the corner, not drinking. Two beers, for the biologists, were taken out. After one of the biologists passed his beer to me a third one was taken out. It had been obvious that I wouldn't drink. The same happened when aguardiente was tasted earlier today. In the birthday party women were cooking in the kitchen and ate afterwards, when men already moved back to the other room to drink beer again. Earlier today I had asked the agent's sister, whether men ever cooked and she said that very few times. (Fieldnotes, the 23rd of February 2016).

In Analco and in a lesser amount in San Pedro, social order of the community relies heavily on kinship relations, early and inner-familiar marriages between cousins being common, and on stereotypic, gendered division of labour[30]. In this respect, my condition as an unmarried woman did not seem quite correct or easy to locate in the sense of

[30] On the centrality of familiar relations in a Chinantec settlement of migrated *tlatepuzqueños,* see Merrifield 1959.

communal order. The major difference between me and the women of my own age, with whom I made some close friendship, did not lay on the fact that I had studied more or that I was from another country, but instead on the point that most of these women had already several children and ten years of marriage behind them. Here, my own life situation did not seem as something enviable, but more as something to be concerned of. As the previous quote from the agent's birthday reception demonstrates, I was in many situations placed in a somehow liminal position between men and women, being able to participate in such events as communal cooking and gossiping but also in some manly situations, from which women usually withdrew, such as assemblies of CORENCHI or speaking with people from outside, people from the environmental organization or local political parties.

"*We go for a hen. In the upper most house of San Antonio Analco, where the aunts of Mariana live in a hut surrounded by the scent of orange trees and where mamey oil cures all the wounds. Hen doesn't want to sit on the eggs and while struggling to get free, it breaks one of them. Mariana plucks one of its feathers through its nostrils, to make the hen learn. Feather has blood on it, and so does the nose of the hen. Mariana withdraws the feather and makes the hen to sit on the eggs again. Later on, when cooking tepejilote for the CORENCHI assembly, I see from the window of the communitarian kitchen that the manager of the environmental organization has arrived. Women ask me, whether I would stay to join them to wash the dishes. I say that I would rather stay, but I should go with the manager who is waiting for me outside. Valentina tells me softly that it was a joke, I should go. I enter to the office of common goods. 'Did you go for an escaped cow?' Manager asks me, with a joking tone in his voice. I answer, keeping my face serious: 'No, I went for a hen actually.'"* (Fieldnotes, the 9th of April 2016).

3. STATE CONTROL

Efforts towards biodiversity conservation as co-operation between state institutions, environmentalists and indigenous communities started in Chinantla in the 1990's. In the 1980's communities of the region had largely concentrated on coffee production. The activity had a lot of governmental support and the national coffee institution[31] bought almost all the harvest at the time. In San Pedro, an airstrip was cleared in the mountain in order to transport coffee from the community by airplane. In the 1990's a huge drop[32] in coffee price of international market coincided with a sudden retreat of all the governmental support to the activity. Producers in remote communities were left alone with the now unprofitable agricultural activity. In San Pedro, the abandoned airstrip filled with vegetation.

In this chapter focusing on state control, I will dig into the question of how Mexican state has been present and exercising control in the studied communities through governmental aid programs and especially through this specific nature conservation program. For this end, I will contextualise by presenting how state control, as objected to indigenous communities, has been practiced in Mexico historically and in the present both through integrative processes reflected on so called politics of *indigenismo*, assimilative public policies, and, at the same time, through allowing, recuperating actions for cultural pluralism that have taken place especially in the state of Oaxaca. I will situate the conservation program as part of Oaxacan and Mexican historical context to demonstrate how communitarian conservation takes place at the same time with a series of government's and its institutions' aims to recuperate administrability in the state of Oaxaca since the 1990's filling the regional vacuum left by the crisis in coffee production.

After paying attention to the ways in which state control is present in the Chinantec communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco, my understanding is that this control is experienced in two distinct ways: firstly, in the concrete level of the corrupted and troublesome local, municipal politics in Usila and secondly in a more abstract way, represented by the conservation program and the contact to the state institutions established through this. In my theoretical reflections, for the focus of this study, I will pay attention to the state presence in the efforts for nature conservation: how

[31] INMECAFE (Instituto Mexicano del Café, Mexican Coffee Intitution).

[32] When in the 1980's a producer in the region gained approximately 11 Mexican pesos / kg of coffee, in 1993 the value had dropped to 2,25 pesos / kg (Sesia 2002, 35).

this abstract relation results in the concrete realities of the communities. I will problematize the category of ethnicity as the common background for the whole setting, but especially for the chapter describing indigenous, separate administrations by *usos y costumbres,* the counterpart to state's control.

Assimilative, homogenizing attempts, so called politics of *indigenismo,* are comparable to the ideas of anthropologist James Scott (1998) about rough state simplifications: how populations can be controlled and regulated through control and regulation of spaces, in this specific case in a nature conservation zone. This regulation and control brought by the establishment of a conservation zone is different from the regulatory actions, such as myths and histories, relationships with other communities and beings of the territory, of the proper communities. Still, they are also corresponding with the local systems of administration and worldview. As suggested by Oaxacan anthropologist Alicia Barabas (2004, 2006) in chapter five I will further reflect on these changes, not solely as roughly homogenizing and intrusive, but also as part of the complex syncretic and dynamic processes taking place within the indigenous context of Mexico.

3.1. Ethnicity and indigenous identity

My first experience of the problematic ethnicity in Mexico was in a class of social politics at my exchange university in Mexico City. Teacher had provoked us to anonymously form ideas of different stereotypically discriminated categories of people. I was quite surprised by the results of the questionnaire, while listening to my class mates' negative ideas about indigenous peoples referring to such personal and diminishing characteristics as "dirtiness" and "poorness", as I was still ignorant of the history of "the indigenous problem" in Mexico (Korsbaek & Sámano-Rentería 2007, 197). Mexican anthropologist Héctor Díaz-Polanco (2009, 20-21) argues that being indigenous has become "a condition" of a negative weight. Similarly, but more politically Alicia Barabas (2006, 129) argues that in Mexico an ethnic identity should not be understood as solely traditions and customs of the popular imaginaries, but also as "a dispossessed identity". Here I will discuss this category of indigenousness; the creation of it as separate from *mestizo,* mixed background origin, and as socially construed to become subordinate to it, "a condition", "a dispossessed identity" or "a problem".

In national statistics, the calculated number of indigenous peoples in Mexico is around 103 million of persons by any official indicator (Navarrete Linares 2008, 9). Thus, Mexico counts with the highest number of persons identifying as indigenous in Latin American countries (CEPAL 2014). In year 2010 there were around 6 million speakers of the 67 indigenous languages with their regional variants (INEGI 2010). Quantitative identification of indigenous populations by sole linguistic means was used in Mexico during the earlier years of assimilative politics, but since then it has been criticized and nowadays accompanied or even replaced by means of self-identification (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos de México 1917, art. 2°; Díaz-Polanco 2009, 8, 21). Chinantecs of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco still emphasized their indigenous language when defining, what it means to be Chinantec and, why the civil organization, CORENCHI, is an indigenous organization. This is how Gustavo and Abelino, both younger men from the community of Analco, comment on the theme:

Me*: What does it mean to be Chinantec?*

"Chinantec is the language that we dominate, ahora sí, the maternal tongue. It's a, ahora sí… We speak in a way, ahora sí, in a dialect. Even it varies in every community, but still one understands, it's Chinantec until Nopalera del Rosario as well. They are part of Chinantla and Chinantecs. That's how it is. Yes, we conserve it here in San Antonio Analco one hundred percent. I see the children, already from their… Well, almost no, very little Spanish." (Gustavo).

"*Bueno, to be Chinantec, I think that comes from our people, our passed people. To be Chinantec means, I'm not well known with the theme, but more or less, I'd say: being Chinantec is to be people of the same speech, of the same dialect. More or less understandable in the zone."* (Abelino).

The one to identify being Chinantec and speaking Chinantec as "a condition" is the former president of CORENCHI, Don Pedro Osorio from the community of Santa Cruz. He sees that the forest conservation project has permitted the communities to progress in terms of welfare without giving up of their lifestyle, way of being and of their language, which he sees at the same time separating, but also as something important to pass on to the future generations:

"*We… Our communication is indigenous. The maternal language chinanteco. Then it helps us, when we are organized, to plan it directly, it's the easiest in our own language,*

no. Our way of being, our necessities that at this moment, pues, they are oppressing us, no. Sí. Then it has facilitated us. And that we would not end up to the 'I won't speak Chinantec anymore, I won't be a farmer anymore', no. No, but to take advantage of these conditions. We are farmers. And the idea is that these forests will be maintained for the future. The first thing is that they are permitting services to us. And the other is to give them as heritage to our future grandchildren. To give them as they are."

In the official, legislative terms, there should be no reason for being indigenous or speaking an indigenous maternal tongue to be separating and discriminating factors and "a condition". Pluricultural composition is seemingly guaranteed by the federal constitution (1917, art. 2°). Federal constitution, formed and reformed over the years by governmental institutions and anthropologists collaborating with these during the years of paternalistic assimilative politics, has not satisfied more critical spokespersons of indigenous rights in Mexico. Himself involved in the design of the assimilative politics from the 1950's on, anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1979, 15-16) argues that domination of one sector of the society does not result as multiculturality, but instead various diverse societies are this way put into a single political framework of the superior system, referring to the Mexican constitutional project. Forming part of the following generation of Mexican anthropologists working on "the indigenous problem" Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1987) cannot see the multiculturality neither, but instead declares Mexico as "two civilizations": "the imagined Mexico", construed with foreign ideals and values, and "the profound Mexico", the indigenous Mexico.

Mexican federal constitution is applicable to those who personally identify as indigenous and as part of an indigenous community practicing its local customs of governance, *usos y costumbres.* Mexican constitution recognizes the right to self-determination and autonomy of indigenous communities, but leaves the execution of this right to the state entities forming the federation (1917, art. 2°). Oaxaca is the only one of Mexican federal states that has recognized the municipal and community electoral practices by local, indigenous administrations of *usos y costumbres* in its political constitutional law (1922, art. 16°), motives of which will be further discussed in the upcoming subchapters.

So, how did being indigenous become "a condition" or "a dispossessed identity" then, not only subordinate in the federal legislation, but also in a more generalized way in the public opinions, like in those of my class mates in Mexico City? In Mexico, there

exists a long history of outer and inner colonialization. In Chinantla, prevalent Aztec rule changed into a Spanish one in the early 16th century. Maurilio in San Pedro Tlatepusco laughs for the story: "*Our ancestors are buried with nothing more than, what Hernán Cortés gave to us… He exchanged all the gold for a mirror, nothing more. People let him lie to them, because, think about that, he came here for the first time and has a mirror with him, one can see oneself in a mirror, pues. That's what Hernán Cortés did. And also, Cristobal Colon. Because there was a lot of gold in here. But good gold, pues. They have told me the story that there was a lot of gold in Chinantla. All the way there in Jalapa de Díaz, passing Usila. And he lied to people with a simple mirror, pues. He said that this is more valorous than gold. Only because one can see oneself.*" Here I will not go deeply into the fraud of Hernán Cortés and the assimilative politics of the colony and the early nation state. I will concentrate with more attention in the time after Spanish colony. I will introduce briefly the assimilative institutional politics and public policies, known as *indigenismo*, taking place after Mexican revolution (from 1920 on). I will present a proposal to consider communal conservation efforts as continuation to assimilative state efforts.

Indigeneity, being of "Mesoamerican" or pre-Hispanic origin, is negotiated in relation to a counterpart: *mestizo*. Rodolfo Stavenhagen (2000, 31) argues that "the indigenous" was and is created by the former national institution for indigenous affairs, INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista, National Indigenist Institution), the formation of which was the culmination of politics of *indigenismo* in 1948. This institution continues its existence as the current day's CDI. During these assimilative state politics of the mid-20th century, ethnic question was tried to turn into another one of social class presenting indigenous peoples as "peasants" and communities as "villages" not different from the *mestizo* ones (Korsbaek & Sámano-Rantería 2007, 204). Assimilative politics were based on an assumption of indigenous peoples as a problem, "the Indian problem", that could not fulfil the ideals of "a cosmic race" represented by *mestizo* (ibid., 201). Base was laid on the discursive difference and for the prejudices towards indigenous peoples. Objectives of these politics in the beginning were indeed to Mexicanize "the Indian" (Stavenhagen 2000, 22; Bonfil Batalla 1987, 45), a kind of a narrowing vision of knowledges, citizenship and identities necessary to govern marginal populations since uniformities and simplicity are more manageable and easier to govern and modify than complexities and plurality (Scott 1998).

Political scientist David Recondo does not consider these assimilative politics of *indigenismo* in Mexico and more specifically in the state of Oaxaca only as part of the intensive years in the mid 20th century. Instead, he sees that they have gone through different phases, from the aggressive politics of integration through state institutions described above to ethnopopulism[33] and to *indigenismo* of participation, both including indigenous populations or representors of these in the decision making concerning indigenous affairs. Recondo claims that the most recent shift in the politics concerning indigenous populations is the move towards *indigenismo* of recognition, this being the most apparent in the process of legalization of local electoral practices by *usos y costumbres* in the state of Oaxaca. (Recondo 2007, 87.) This way the recognizing processes by Oaxacan state government during the last two decades can be seen as a continuum to the assimilative politics and attempts to create a more homogenous nation state by the means of state institutions. In the following subchapters, I will demonstrate how the nature conservation project in Chinantla can be seen as part of these recognizing, and as suggested, at the same time assimilative politics that have ultimately taken place through the acceptance of diversities and heterogeneity, multiculturality, instead of enforcing homogenic and standardized citizenship as in the earlier politics of *indigenismo* and as in the argument of James Scott about state control through simplifications.

3.2. *Usos y costumbres*, the autonomous sphere (?)

"*We are autonomous, we have our usos y costumbres,*" Valentina's father tells me with a sharp voice in the community of Analco. In San Pedro, Pancho explains me how the community appears to him "as a little country" with its own rules and legislation. Here I will discuss community as commonly seen, and as described by my informants, as an autonomous sphere represented by its inner forms of social organization, *usos y costumbres,* and customary law. In popular views and more academic literature, including anthropologists, to juxtaposition communal orders of indigenous peoples with the centralized state power has been common (Gross 2006, 21). Local culture and ways of life, practice of *usos y costumbres,* can be seen as "weapons of the weak", to borrow James Scott's (1985) expression to describe every day peasant revolt constituting an

[33] Continuation for the integrative institutional *indigenismo, also* facilitated by anthropologists serving public offices in the 1970's and 1980's, to mention some Bonfil Batalla and Stavenhagen can be considered as representors of this phase of politics of *indigenismo*. See Recondo 2007, 92-93.

autonomous sphere, contrary to the state government and political parties (Gross 2011, 65). So called participative or direct democracy is seen as distant from and even contrary to the state's representative democracy (Recondo 2007, 350). Participative democracy is in many occasions described as the more just and, indeed, the more democratic one of these two forms of administration (Gross 2006, 21).

Still, it has been widely claimed, and was visible in the communities' life during my stay, that the direct juxtaposition of local administration by *usos y costumbres* and state organization cannot be presented this simplistically and instead this can even be questioned (see for an example Anaya Muñoz 2007, 18; Gross 2006; Nader 1990, 32, 35). Same applies to the arguments about the equality of participative democracy. Assemblies and the system of *cargos* are hierarchical and exclusive for an example in respect to gender, wealth, age and experience (see Anaya Muñoz 2007, 18; Nader 1990, 32, 35).

In the state of Oaxaca after the legislative recognition of electoral *usos y costumbres,* in 2001 there are currently over 400 municipalities, which are *costumbristas*, having their municipal authorities' selection by *usos y costumbres* instead of electing them from candidates presented by political parties. These ways of customary administration vary by localities. (Anaya Muñoz 2006, 111; Recondo 2007, 50.) In the case of the communities of CORENCHI; they are all *costumbristas*, but the municipality of Usila, earlier *costumbrista*[34], forms now part of the national electoral system based on political parties. Still, in the party-based political order of Usila, division of administrative tasks inside the parties is based on the procedure of assembly and direct voting, as in the systems of *usos y costumbres* (see Recondo 2007, 144). Here I will introduce the characteristics of the system of *usos y costumbres*, which are pertinent in the communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco, as these administrative customs can vary widely in different Oaxacan and Mexican indigenous communities.

"*Estee, I think we are, let's say, half forced, but still forced to serve the village with cargo,"* Mariano, middle-aged community member from San Pedro, admits to me. In San Pedro and Analco, *cargos*, unpaid but binding and in other ways remunerative administrative offices to "serve the village", are an elementary part of the communal administration. Two most important offices of *cargos* are the office of the communal agent (changes every year, but in Analco, the agent can continue another year by re-

[34] About the earlier political organization in Usila, see Weitlaner & Castro 1973, 155.

election) and the office of common goods (changes every three years). These offices and the selection of their board members seem to be determined by existing family and other ties. School has its own cargos and so do the Catholic church, health care center and DICONSA, a state owned communal shop, in the case of Analco.

Unlike in some other Oaxacan communities, to attain the highest *cargos*, one does not need to possess monetary wealth much over other community members. In Analco, community's agent recently sponsored the placement of a door to the communitarian kitchen during his administration. In San Pedro, annual change of agent's office authorities is celebrated by a round of *popo*[35], cacao and *cocolmeca* based foamy drink, invited by the new agent to all the community members. Especially in the community of Analco, where public officers are faced by a pile of paper work, porters of the highest *cargos* have usually less time to dedicate to agricultural activities and this way family's economy might be stressed by the administrative tasks. This is experienced as a load for *cargo* holders. Tomás, secretary from the common goods office in Analco, tells that in his community the aim has been to relieve the pressure of repeated higher *cargos* by educating substitutes and by shifting this way some of the responsibilities to them. *Cargos* are not solely experienced as a load, but also as an honour. In San Pedro, despite the expressed reluctance towards CORENCHI cargos, I was commented that one of the reasons for the existence of as many as three different Evangelic churches and a smaller Catholic church seems to be the earlier disagreements and competition over higher church pastors' positions.

"*Because eee one head is different from another. We think differently, but here the assembly is maxima, pues. If I don't agree, I need to adapt to the majority… And that's good,"* Don Pedro Osorio, Santa Cruz Tepetotutla, explains to me. In the communities of CORENCHI decisions are taken in general assemblies, hours or the whole day lasting meetings of *comuneros* in their own language. Participants of the common decision making are men and in these communities a couple of women, who are for some reason, momentarily or permanently, single and heads of their family. Participants of the assemblies have right to vote by raising hand and decisions are based on a consensus of the majority of votes. Still Mariano explains me how certain people always speak and others keep silent, when it is time to gather in the general assembly: "*But when it's time*

[35] A drink typical to San Pedro. Made of ground cacao, cinnamon, *atole* corn dough and *cocolmeca ("vanilla for the popo")* or Chinese root.

for the assembly, ya, then all the people don't speak. Noo, they are ashamed, I think. Because, because equally, when we do the assembly I don't speak. But I don't estee… When people from outside come, I almost not, do not speak. A-haa, because there are some that speak a lot. They like to participate a lot. Así." The third important component of the system of *usos y costumbres* in Analco and San Pedro, is the communal work of *tequio* (Bonfil Batalla 1987, 61; Nader 1990, 44). Labours conducted in *tequios* are usually public construction works or cleaning of public spaces and roads. In Analco, *tequio* is announced at least four times a year and one of the four roads leading to the community is to be cleaned each time.

Usos y costumbres are many times referred as ancestral and since then for ever existed, an inherent part of the communal order (Nader 1990, 3, 20; Stavenhagen 2000, 30). I discussed the theme in Analco with the men gathered, as usual, around the basketball field in the early evening hours. Don Anselmo Manuel nodded; yes, *usos y costumbres* have always existed here in Analco. Ana Paula de Teresa (2011, 60) refers to religious syncretic processes in the Chinantla region as the "new traditional culture". I would like to widen the idea of syncretism, understood as mixing of different customs, belief systems and influences in the course of time and as an outcome of different relations, usually referred to when speaking about religious practices in the Mexican indigenous context, and the term "new traditional culture" used by de Teresa, to cover also the administrative practices, *usos y costumbres*, of the communities. Going briefly back to the fraud of Hernán Cortés, I will explain why.

There exist historical remarks from the archaeological studies of Leopoldo Chagoya Morgan (1985) of the former kingdom of a single Chinantec ruler (*Señor)* during the pre-Hispanic times. This ruler, *Quia-na*, is said to have found his dynasty in 1110 in a locality that is nowadays known as the neighbouring community of San Pedro: San Felipe de León. Localities at the time had severe warfare against each other and this together with the pre-Christian religious order defined the hierarchies based on the land and properties rights of priests, principles, soldiers, *naguas* and *caciques*[36]. Also, council of ancient people, not known any more in the communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco, but otherwise still commonly part of the system of *usos y costumbres* in other localities of Oaxaca, had an important position during the pre-

[36] *Naguas* = persons capable of transforming into a natural being, *caciques* = mediators between local people and administrative elites.

Hispanic times. The lowest in the social hierarchies were slaves, taken as war prisoners. Continuous warfare led to the division of two Chinantlas and, finally to three different administrative entities (*Señorios),* of which Usila used to form first part of *Chinantla Pichinche* and later on, its own administrative area, *Señorio*, from the first half of the 14th century. When Spaniards led by Hernán Cortés arrived to Chinantla in 1520, Chinantec kingdoms had already bent under Aztec rule just in 1455 and Moctezuma led the region from Tuxtepec that had become an administrative centre. (Bevan 1938, 49-50; CDI 2012, 14-19; Chagoya Morgan 1985, 34-45, 56-58, 91; Merrifield 1966, 589; Oliveras de Ita 2005, 5, 8).

Anthropologist Eric Wolf (1982, 145) notes that it is common even amongst anthropologists to mistake to praise the pre-Hispanic origins of indigenous political organizations. In recent literature[37], these autonomous governing systems are more commonly characterized as combinations of pre-Hispanic, colonial and contemporary components, but only very few times the formation of administration by *usos y costumbres* is explored any further. In Chinantla, there are remarks of the pre-Hispanic existence of communal work, *tequio,* but otherwise the rule by *usos y costumbres* seems to be of later origin (Chagoya Morgan 1985, 60; Bevan 1938, 51). Wolf describes how organization by *usos y costumbres* has developed as it is today in many parts of rural Mexico. During the colony, in order to destroy indigenous spheres of power Spanish administrations first set up *haciendas*, large production units with indigenous peoples working the land owned by Spanish crown. This model was developed to *cabildos*: communities given a legal identity, local administrative councils and named Patron Saints and lands with the condition to pay tributes as goods and work to the crown. Special indigenous courts were established. These bureaucratical arrangements together with the ongoing Catholic conversion formed civil-religious hierarchies. Local elites, more pertinent elsewhere than in the communities of Analco and San Pedro, started to form already at the time as organizing rituals imposed by Catholic feast calendar was costly to arrange. The same syncretism, mix of practices and worldviews, present in the Catholic representations can thus also be found in the social organization by *usos y costumbres*. These local administrative practices should not be understood as pre-Hispanic givens, but

[37] See for an example Anaya Muñoz 2006, 14-16; Barabas 2006, 119; Nader 1990, 296-307; Recondo 2007, 47.

as products of historic events and encounters, part of dynamic processes of adaptation and change resulting here as "new traditional culture". (Wolf 1982, 145-148.)

Presentation of the administrative systems by *usos y costumbres* in this work is not only relevant as they are conventionally, and questionably, seen as a keen constitutive part of the autonomous sphere of indigenous communities and contrary to the centralized state power, but also for their importance in the implementation and outcomes of the nature conservation program in Chinantla. Governmental programs can influence and change the earlier, "traditional" communitarian organizations by *usos y costumbres*, but also the pre-existing local order and hierarchies influence the ways of realization of a governmental program in indigenous communities (Gross 2011, 67). First president of CORENCHI, Don Pedro Osorio, sees that the advantage of this program in co-operation with the NGO Geoconservación, has been indeed the respect and adaptation of the program towards communitarian ways of organization. "*But many of them [earlier projects] came to work in the level of a program that had nothing to do. If a program has more of requisites to fulfil, from where they are sending this [program] from? This [program] has nothing to do in these communities. But if it [a program] comes to co-operate and is willing to co-operate with the communities: go ahead, bienvenido! This is the people that we needed pues, that help the communities to plan it. There is the necessity and priorities, each community was to put these. To say, what is its necessity, that it had, pues. And also, sometimes the programs don't take these into account, no. Siii, they don't take these into account. The first thing is… They are not familiar with the communitarian process, pues. Here we say that to work with us is precisely this, not to disregard one part… Sí. So, we would like that the programs were more flexible with the communitarian process."* For Don Pedro conservation does not include only the conservation of the forest, but also of culture: "*Siii. But the central idea is that from our proper spaces we can work. First is to conserve. If we speak about conservation, we are not speaking only about the forests. We should also conserve the children. So, what we have proposed is that to understand these spaces is to conserve our people so that we have work with economic income. Sí. And that part is difficult, o sea."*

And so, it is that CORENCHI as a civil organization has adapted to the customs of the communities. CORENCHI is organized by *usos y costumbres* with unpaid *cargos* of president, treasurer, secretary and four CORENCHI delegates from each community with the responsibility to participate in CORENCHI's meetings and events with the officer of

common goods. *Cargos* of CORENCHI change every two years. *Cargos* of the board are generally occupied by the more pro-conservation communities of Santa Cruz and el Barrio. Still, the former president of CORENCHI, 2014-15, was selected amongst *analqueños,* who have more positive or at least stable and unified attitudes towards the program.

Even the program is seen as respective towards "the new traditional" ways of organization, *usos y costumbres,* it has also brought some administrative changes in the localities. As the "money for conservation" is divided amongst all *comuneros,* this has brought changes to local dynamics, participation and *usos y costumbres.* Most notably in Analco, the quantity of female *comuneras* rose after the decision to pay the income for each *comunero/a.* This has increased the participation of women in communal tasks, such as administrative *cargos* and communal work, *tequio,* earlier reserved mostly for men. Major inclusion of women has increasingly been the aim of governmental development and forestry programs and these changes are not unquestionable at all in the communities (see Nvinoticias 2017). Gustavo comments on the theme after the communal assembly in Analco decided to decrease the amount of money that *comuneras,* 11 female community members, receive from the program: "*Eeeee, look, sí, a while ago they manifested, because when it has to do with money, recurso, it's not on a par for everyone. And a while ago we reminded that, thinking more on the women, because if the money is divided equally on a par that wants to say that also the tasks that the program implicates, the tasks we do to secure the money… This also brings measurements. Nooo, you can't just receive the money and yaaa vamonos, let's go. Nooo, that brings a lot of tasks. A while ago we reminded, not to discriminate them like that… But mainly the women: they worked a little in percentage. Would we give them money to have a rest? 'Let's see if we'd go there to work two, three hours and it's a place where we can have an accident'. A woman does not have the same physicality as a man, noo. So that was one of the decisions to help a little the women."*

Adaptation of the program to the local practices is not limited to these state-encouraged changes or intents, as in the case of trying to implement more urban and western based views on gender. The divisions and contradictions based on age, gender and affiliation present in the realization of communal *usos y costumbres* are present in the implementation of the conservation program as well. Entrance of the program in the 1990's was depending on local *caciquismo,* mediation with external actors by local

community members. Program has since the beginning divided opinions in each of the communities, more in some and less in others. Influence of local divisions in carrying out the program is the most visible in the community of San Pedro, thorn by doubts. The officer of common goods has a lot to say in the assemblies and has contributed so that strongly divided San Pedro still continues in the program. "*So, with the six persons, who still were in favour of the program, they helped the officer: let's do this and this and see if these people really don't want to continue in the program. We will ask them one day and if they really don't want to, we won't force anyone. Instead we will continue working with the ones that want to work. But then they cannot say, when the money is divided that they were left out… But as there was majority of the people that said 'no, let's continue', that's what they said and that's how with this officer we gained. For this officer that is now. O sea, he helped us a lot to continue in the program*," Don Felipe describes San Pedro's recent decision to still continue within the conservation program. "*The officer was voted by his family to get the office, he wants the money of the conservation to construct his own house*," I was told meanwhile by other community members. Mariana Orozco Ramírez (2011, 151) has described how in another part of Chinantla, in the neighbourhood of Valle Real, municipality of Valle Nacional, local political divisions strongly determine the distribution of governmental monetary aids that are not used according to the programs' guidelines, but instead for individual purposes, like buying sheet metal and other materials to improve housing. I still want to distress that even existent, local corruption in the communities of Analco and San Pedro is not as notable as has been identified in other localities of the region.

3.3. Conservation, the abstract state sphere

By the abstract state, contrasting with the concrete representation of political parties in the municipal centre, I refer to the community members' ideas of the federal state, its institutions and the rules imposed by the conservation program. Civil organization Geoconservación acts here as an intermediator, a sort of *cacique*, between the state and the communities.

I will first reflect on the abstract state presence through public policies in Mexico and generally through social development programs in the studied context. Finally, I will do this in terms of nature conservation. Here, in a time scale from the earlier assimilative,

indigenist politics till this specific moment and context, I find pertinent the ideas of anthropologist James Scott concerning state simplifications in a homogenizing state construction process. I will demonstrate how in the state of Oaxaca public policies were consciously given another kind of an allowing direction and, unlike the examples of James Scott and here seemingly even stereotypic politics of integrative *indigenismo,* the control is now construed through "what seems liberating" (Recondo 2007): the allowance of local forms of administration and biological variety in the conserved and non-manipulated inhabited forest zone. Through careful examination both of these allowances can be found as controlling, either of groups of people or of spaces. I will situate the nature conservation program as part of these described, "liberating" politics and new forms of state control and *indigenismo*.

State simplifications

"*Bees are intelligent, they work together*," local CORENCHI technician Raúl told me, when we were walking in between boxes of bees in the apiary of San Antonio Analco. The 17th century enlightenment philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1651, 149) asks, "why mankind cannot do the same", live peacefully together outside the existence of an institutionalised power. Thomas Hobbes saw a bee society, unlike a human one, to be able to constitute a peaceful commonwealth without an agreement of imposed state power, necessary for a human society to prosper and to avoid an otherwise inevitable state of nature, a war of every man against every man (ibid., 146-151). Unlike Hobbes, Scott (1998) does not see the organization as a state necessary for the survival of mankind, but instead as manipulation, imposed to control marginal populations and, at the same time, to increase their productiveness. He compares the modern way of beekeeping, "allowing the beekeeper to inspect the condition of the colony and the queen, judge its honey production (by weight), enlarge or contract the size of the hive by standard units, move it to a new location, and, above all, to extract just enough honey (in temperate climates) to ensure that the colony will overwinter successfully", with the standardizing and rationalizing state control imposed to this otherwise naturally organized society (ibid., 2-3). I will discuss the ideas of Scott, comparable to the assimilative politics taking place historically and currently in Mexico, about the state as strategically simplifying and homogenizing in order to secure major governmentality.

* * *

"Electoral candidate for governor's office, Alejandro Murat, visited the municipality of Usila in February 2016. For the occation, the villagers of San Felipe Jalapa de Díaz, unsatisfied with their local deputies, blocked the road from Tuxtepec to Usila. With Analco's common goods officer and his secretary we had already sat a while in the road side waiting for a lift to take us back up to the mountains, when we heard a sound of propeller above us. The candidate had arrived by a helicopter. Soon the candidate would cross the fully packed basketball field, stopping to shake hands with the villagers from the surrounding indigenous communitites and to take pictures with women wearing their colourful Chinantec huipiles. Loudspeakers were repeating famous list hit songs, like "Sube la adrenalina" of JLO, Wisin and Ricky Martin, now recomposed with lyricks telling about the excellent candidate." (Fieldnotes, the 19th of February 2016).

In his visit Murat told that now he understands how it is not to have a road after the experience of having it cut by the villagers in Jalapa de Díaz. San Pedro Tlatepusco, being the remotest of municipality's agencies, has been now for ten years in a projection to get a drivable road. I chattered with Juana, while we were walking in a late October morning by the river side from Usila to San Pedro. We were carrying our packages, me my backpack and Juana with *mecapal* in her back aliments sent by the state aid program DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, Integral Family Development): sardines in a can, dried fruits, *maseca* corn flour, *sopa* (pasta), genetically modified soy (*"*dog food," as told by an older *señora, ma² yu¹ Lí*, in Analco). Juana tells me about taking her elderly mother earlier this week by feet, as there is no other choice, to Usila in order to obtain medical care. Grandmother walked the whole way with her bare feet, as many of the older women in the communities, and she did not want to stop even to have a break. "*When we got to Usila, I put her shoes on to not walk barefoot in the city*."

Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran (1979) and James Scott (2009, 22) write about "zones of refuge", difficultly reached places in the edges or outside of centralized state power. Centralized power reaches these places through construing roads and bridges or, as in the case of San Pedro and Analco, through not implementing these infrastructural facilities and connections, including cellphone and internet network connections (see Scott 2009, 43-62). In both cases of Analco and San Pedro the road connection has not been a governmental imposition, but instead self-negotiated privately (the case of Analco) or a long waited and hoped process (San Pedro). Control has not been imposed through

physical road connection to the national order and the city centers, neither through total in-connection, but instead through strategic connections. Both of the communities lack their means of communication and for a long time they both lacked a drivable road as well. Construction of the road to Analco was completed in 2009. In San Pedro, I was told that community's school building used to have an internet connection, which had stopped working three years earlier to my reseach. Community members do not know exactly why, but shook their shoulders and conclude: "*It doesn't benefit the government*."

Still from around 2006 onwards, the communities are connected to the national tv-network system. Major part of the households in both localities count with an antenna and a tv-apparatus. "*To distract myself a bit*," says the daughter of Lupita in Analco, feeding her baby and watching the unreal reality of tide bodies and superficial problems in the daily episode of the soap opera *Doña Barbara*, ironically situated in the Colombian jungle. From the 1950's on, with the apparition of private massive medias, these have been used to transmit values and norms; patterns of behavior and beauty ideals (Aboites & Loyo 2000, 295-297; Loeaza 2000, 383). Private companies working together with national and federal governments have been able to govern remote areas and to participate in the intents of creation and reproduction of more unified and homogenized ideas and ideals as well as sentiments of subordination (Rodriguez Kuri & Gonzalez Mello 2000, 401, 409,413).

Scott (1998) argues that state imposes through different means a homogenizing, simplifying and unifying control to spaces and peoples. He explains this with an example of scientific forestry that turns forests into equalized commodities (ibid., 11-20). The shift is material and ideological at the same time connecting the simplifying state process to profit making market ideals. Scott maintains that simplicities and uniformities of spaces and people are easier to manage, experiment and to control by the state (ibid., 18). Ideas of a homogenizing state and of the control through forced uniformity are close to the current understandings of the past, and still in a way continuing, assimilative politics of *indigenismo.* "Uniform citizenship", as Scott (ibid., 32) calls this, is attempted to reach through national school system that in Oaxaca many times make the rural school teachers to circulate from one locality to another, but only few times to a one, where they would be able to speak and teach in the local language. Connected to this, Scott claims that an imposed single national language is "the most powerful of the state simplifications" (ibid., 72).

I will discuss now how simplifications and thus control are imposed in Analco and San Pedro through common governmental development and aid programs, such as for example earlier mentioned DIF or the farmers' support program PROAGRO (Programa de Fomento a la Agricultura, Program for the Promotion of Agriculture)[38]. After this, I will move on to analyze the particular nature conservation project of CORENCHI as part of or a continuum to the assimilative, homogenizing politics described by Scott and stereotypically represented by the classical *indigenismo* policies. Programs such as DIF that divide above mentioned type of canned aliments to rural, "marginal" communities and PROAGRO that offers the farmers cultivable crops and tools (for an example, pesticides, "liquids", and equipment necessary for the fumigation of these) are descriptive examples of controlling both spaces, through imposed alimentary models affecting directly the main agricultural activities, and peoples, taking them closer to the desired eating and living habits of urban areas.

As mentioned earlier, the community members of Analco and San Pedro are proud of their local food and diversity of eatable plants, contrasting these continuously with the surrounding municipal centers or cities. This confrontation of local and foreign foods is parallel to another one of lifestyles and worldviews. Food and crops sent by governmental programs are unquestionably seen as genetically modified, *transgenico,* and thus bad[39]. "*For this corn, they lost the native crops in Usila*," I was told by the community members. Each one of the CORENCHI communities has made an agreement to not to accept crops offered by the state program PROAGRO. This is how the delegates and technicians commented on the agreement in San Pedro: "*Sí, ahorita there is este a rule. Because ahorita estee, like from PROAGRO, they want to put another crop. Us, we have a rule in the community not to receive this crop. To always have native crops, semilla criolla. Eso sí, there exists a rule... Transgenetic! Improved corn. If one cultivates this then already, criollo goes down. That's the corn that they were about to give us. And apart from that, pues ya, they offer liquids and all of that as well.*"

[38] The predecessor of the program, PROCAMPO, was initiated in 1993. Right to receive benefits of the program (monetary aid of 1500 Mexican pesos per year, agricultural tools and crops) is inherited from father to son. In San Pedro, I was commented that almost all the community members are beneficiaries of the program, in Analco I was told that around 50 *comuneros* receive currently the benefit.

[39] In Mexico, there is an on going heated public conversation about genetic modification of corn, a plant originating and domesticated in pre-Hispanic Mexico. The dispute is about food sovereignty, as the modified crops intended to implant by companies and government programs make communities dependent of buying crops instead of conserving their ancient ones. See for an example Casifop et al. 2012.

Similarly, canned food sent through governmental programs and obligatory lectures on healthy diet by the local representatives[40] are not adapted to local customs of production and living habits neither adjusted with the available variety of edibles. Jaime, San Antonio Analco, tells me that his father lived until 100 years old. "*And when the representatives from PROSPERA asked me, what did my father eat and I answered them: 'quelites', native herbs from here*." In San Pedro, I was reading the back of a bottle of a herbicide that the family of Israel had received from a governmental program[41]. In the description of "the liquid", it is said to be effective against pests, *plagas,* like "*quelites*, dandelion, *tomatillo*" and other endemic, edible plants of the region, forming part of the daily diet, locally considered as healthy and as a source of proud as well.

Besides controlling spaces and productive activities, governmental development programs participate in the creation of ways how people understand themselves in relation to the rest of the population as "marginal", objected to this aid, but also other way around: these programs influence the ways how people understand the surrounding world. An example of the state created knowledge used as manipulation through an aid program is that during a conflict between the federal government and the magisterial movement in Oaxaca, summer 2016, different medias spread information that Oaxaca would be suffering of a shortage of food (see Rioaxaca 2016). Actually, the only stores showing notions of any shortage were the ones that have a connection to the government: state organized DICONSA shops and multinational supermarket chains. Meanwhile popular markets and self-sufficient communities continued to enjoy the products of their parcels.

State control in conserved areas

I will move on to examine means of control of spaces and people through the specific nature conservation program of which the communities of CORENCHI form part. Conservation of the forest with its endemic plant and animal species put together with the Oaxacan allowing legislation might sound as quite opposite to homogenizing attempts described earlier, but features can be found and they will be discussed here. As a starting point to examine these changes and means of control here and further on in

[40] Part of PROSPERA (Programa de Inclusión Social, Program for Social Inclusion).
[41] PIMAF (Programa de Apoyos para Productores de Maíz y Frijol, Aid Program for the Producers of Corn and Beans).

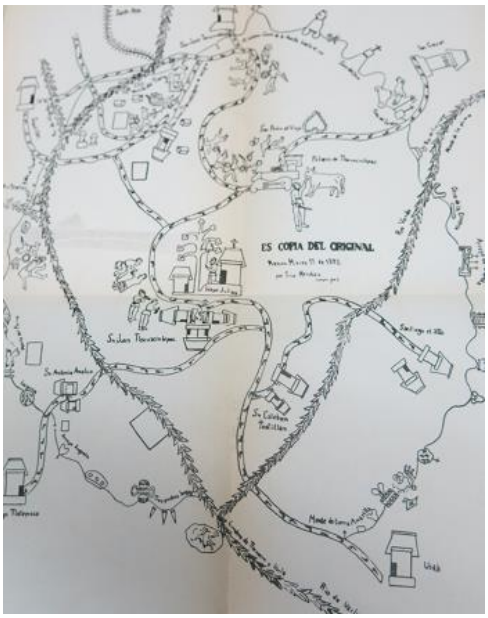
chapters 4. and 5., I will provide a couple of stands made by environmental anthropologists considering inhabited natural conservation zones. Anthropologists Eeva Berglund and David Anderson (2003, 5) argue that, similar to homogenizing forestry programs described by Scott, also the establishment of highly biodiverse conservation areas facilitates the management of marginal zones. Environmental anthropologists Igoe, West and Brockington (2006, 251) write about the social, economic and political transformations brought with the founding of nature conservation zones and about power relations connected to these processes. They claim: places and territories do not stop being sites under constant social and cultural negotiation and construction, in conservation zones they only attract new meanings. In these zones, it changes how people understand themselves in relation to their natural and cultural environments. (Ibid., 252, 261, 264.) Here I will discuss the concrete, homogenizing, integrative and even indigenist aspects of the conservation program and in the next chapter 4. I will move on to place these changes in a wider framework of syncretic dynamics and to reflect on, what these changes mean in the life of the people in Analco and San Pedro, and how they have influenced the ways in which community members understand nature and themselves in relation to this.

Oaxacan anthropologist Alicia Barabas sees regional governmental projects, such as the civil organization CORENCHI, as essentializing attempts to segment heterogeneous population. The danger, in Baraba's view, is that integrated communities lose their communal conscience of their autonomy and territory. (Barabas 2004, 111-112.) It is truth that the conservation zone, as well as earlier territorial changes, such as the division in *ejidos*[42] after Mexican revolution, have brought changes to the physical measurements, borders and markers of communal territories. Alicia Barabas (2004, 114), based on her ethnographic studies in Chinantla amongst other regions in Oaxaca, argue that communal spaces, to her "sacred territories", are defined by the creatures, *chaneques* and *Dueños*, inhabiting these spaces and by natural formations such as "high mountains, water springs, caves, sacred trees and strange rocky formations". This is visible in the pre-Hispanic maps from the region in which territorial borders and relations are marked by natural formations and distances by footsteps (see *Figure 4.)*. These maps contain information such as symbols identified as prey and pre-Christian deities.

[42] Repartition of land after the agrarian and land reform concluding Mexican revolution (Aboites &Loyo 2010, 275-276).

Determination of communal territories' borders and land use, for an example the zones for conservation and agriculture, in the definitions of the conservation program are quite different, well from the pre-Hispanic ones, but also from the ways to define the territory by the community members even today. An example given by Scott (2009, 48) is the difference between the dominance of measure by the metric system and on the other hand the local customary ways to understand time and distances, for instance, by rice cookings. Following the idea, the former president of CORENCHI Don Pedro Osorio describes:

"*The only difficulty is that, bueno, finally eeee the program brings a lot of requisites with it. Many of the estee details pues don't go along with the idea that we have. Many times, we need to limit. A zone considered in a program: you need to open three meters, two meters of a dividing line in between the areas. And this is, what we don't consider pertinent, because we for an example delimit our areas by mountain lines, river valleys or by some plain areas, pues. This is how we delimit our areas, but today the programs are very conditioned. Pues, you need to open lines, you need to fill pure conditions. For us, these cloud forests don't need protection, because all the forest, branches, roots: that is what does the protection, pues. For these forests, sí. So, when doing the lines of two meters… Pues ya: we are taking away these conditions that the forest itself has, no. Sí."*



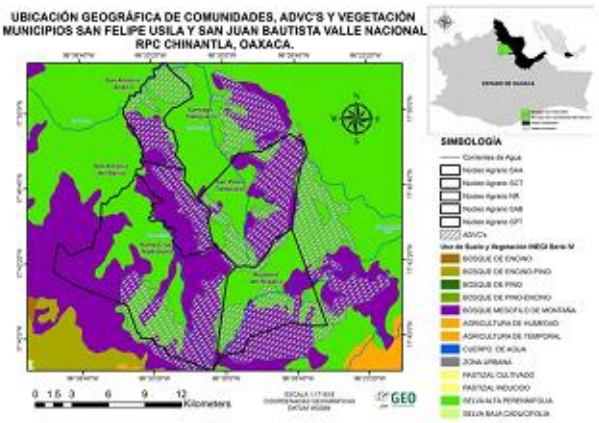


Figure 4. A copy of the pre-Hispanic map of the neighbourhood of San Antonio Analco. In this map observer can find information of roads and rivers, brooks and mountains, animals and naguas, temples and descriptions of warfare between different localities. (Weitlaner & Castro 1954, 188-197).

Figure 5. A map of the total coverage of the communities of CORENCHI provided by Geoconservación. This map contains information of territorial borders of the communities with an exact measurement scale in kilometres, of the prevalent vegetations and of the zones determined to conservation and to agricultural activities. (Geoconservación).

Modification and control of the ways in which community members in the conservation zone understand their territory and the surrounding nature have an influence in the ways of understanding themselves as part of the current order in their municipality, the nation state and the world. Conservation program's views on territory are closer to the dominating western or *mestizo* ways of understanding and measuring spaces, borders and relations of these spaces. This territorial view is scientific and commercial.

* * *

One sunny afternoon we were walking together with the local beekeepers of Analco and two biologists from Geoconservación. The intent of the day was to conduct a study of *Flora Melifera* in order to be able to name the flowers that bees visited and of which the produced honey thus consists of. All the plants and flowers have their name in Chinantec and they seemed to be given spontaneously a direct translation to Spanish, when specifically asked for this, as when I walked with the CORENCHI delegates from

Santa Cruz to Analco, and was given the herb called "*espanto"* as a remedy to scare. Plants are identified by their scientific name by the biologists and their name in Chinantec is also marked down "to rise the market value in the final label of the product".

Bonfil Batalla (1987, 38) has noted that indigenous languages have more detailed classification systems of their natural and social realities. For an example in Analco, in a workshop on native, stingless beekeeping, community members could identify several different species of native bees (*Meliponini)* in their own language with the following characteristics and practical information:

to-cun	stripy patterning, makes a hive of beeswax without a tube in trees
to-djie	small, *chiquito,* as a grain of sand
to-dun	red or oranguish, sticks into one's hair, makes its hive with a tube in trees
to-ia	'the bee of the kettle', black and brown, *cafecito,* makes its hive underground
toj-lej	the black bee, broad = *lej*, bites and annoys, makes its hive in the form of a ball in trees and walls, its honey is a bit poisonous
to-líi	'the flowery bee', has its wings of two different colours like the flowers, body of two different colours: brown and yellow, makes its hive underground
to-zi	brightly coloured, has a sting

Table 1. Variety of native bees (Meliponini) recognized by the community members of San Antonio Analco.

This variety is recognized even community members do not reckon that there would have existed a strong tradition of native beekeeping in these communities[43]. Still, ecologist Fikret Berkes (2012, 59) notes that species of a great cultural importance tend to have more specific classification systems in indigenous cultures. The use of Spanish language and scientific names changes this knowledge about the local natural world. Local classificatory systems are many times informative of the characteristics and uses of a species, as in the case of the herb "*espanto"* on our walk to Analco. Here the direct translation of the plant name gives a direct description of its medicinal use. In the case of bees, contrasting with the variety of Chinantec terms for native bees, for the implemented species there is only one term: *ja-cun*. For some other implemented plants, such as coffee (in San Pedro) and nanche, there might not be a Chinantec term at all. The introduction

[43] On the earlier tradition of beekeeping in the municipality of Usila see Weitlaner & Castro 1973, 93-94, 260-261.

of “African” or “European” bees (as the honey bee *ja-cun, Apis mellifera,* is popularly called by the Chinantecs) is occasionally connected with the disappearance of native, stingless species (*to, Meliponini)* and with the discursive fight over other native species. “*The bees went to the mountain. That’s what happened with cacao and that’s what will happen with the corn as well*,” I was commented in the community of San Pedro.

Acculturation to conservation

I will place the conservation efforts in Chinantla as part of the ongoing recent political processes in Mexico and especially in the state of Oaxaca. I will concentrate in the political process of recognition in the state of Oaxaca, this way situating the conservation program as part of or continuum to the historically meaningful assimilative politics of *indigenismo* discussed earlier in this chapter. David Recondo has argued that assimilative politics are not, as usually thought, solely a remnant from the past decades. In Oaxaca, these politics have undergone transformations from the most striking and commonly recognized *indigenismo* of integration to ethnopopulism, *indigenismo* of participation (of indigenous actors) and, finally, to *indigenismo* of recognition, a reference to the legislative allowance of local electoral practices by *usos y costumbres,* understood as constitutive of the process of indigenous autonomy.

Legislative changes to respond the demands of wider autonomy for indigenous communities were done in between years 1995 and 2001 under the governance of PRI party’s administrations (Anaya Muñoz 2006, 85). Alejandro Anaya Muñoz (2006) and David Recondo (2007), both political scientists, have analysed the causes and implications of the politics of recognition of indigenous autonomy in Oaxaca. They see the recognition of electoral *usos y costumbres* and indigenous autonomy as means to recuperate the impaired control of political parties, especially of the traditionally dominating PRI party, over rural, indigenous communities through something “that seems liberating”. These legislative changes were not a result of an impulse, but of a decades lasting period during which the dominance of PRI over the communities had little by little staggered due to the opening of electoral competence for other parties (Recondo 2007, 121). At the same time different social sectors, such as teachers, farmers, students and indigenous peoples started to get more organized (ibid., 86, 105, 133-135). In the mountains of Oaxaca, the movement started in Sierra Juárez and Sierra Sur as an

organization against state concessions of forestall resources (ibid., 99). What gave a poke for the recognition process was the Zapatist uprising in Chiapas, a long-planned stance as well, but launched finally as a protest against NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement, set into force the 1st of January in 1994. The fact that Oaxaca and Chiapas shared the condition as the two poorest and most indigenous states in Mexico, alarmed the politicians on the possibility of restlessness to spread (ibid., 28, 81).

Year 2001, Oaxacan governor José Murat Casab, father of Alejandro Murat Hinojosa, PRI's candidate for governor's office in 2016, took an acknowledged and popularly lauded position to oppose federal legislative steps invalidating the results of the negotiations between EZLN Zapatist movement and the federal government (Anaya Muñoz 2006, 13, 126-28, 148). The same year, legalization of electoral *usos y costumbres* eliminated over 400 municipalities from the electoral competition in Oaxaca and this way could not raise the electoral popularity of PRI that had been losing its hold of the communities during the past decades, but neither did it benefit any other political party and, by responding the claims of the indigenous sector, it improved the overall administrability of the state[44].

To complement these legislative changes, Oaxacan governments of the 1990's launched a number of aid programs directed to rural populations (Anaya Muñoz 2006, 29). In the beginning of the 1990's communities were organized around productive projects and co-operatives (ibid., 115). Such governmental aid programs as PROSPERA[45] and PROAGRO were also initiated at the time. Municipalities were supported to realize at least one public construction project in each of their rural communities as is the expectation in the municipality of Usila even today (ibid., 115). As PRI had previously gained its entrance to rural communities through *caciques* and the indirect control over communal institutions, now state gained its presence through these aid programs and co-operatives (Recondo 2007, 43). Here I will discuss the relation that the entrance of biodiversity conservation in the 1990's has with these productive projects and co-operatives, part of the state government's acts to recuperate administrability over indigenous communities. As actually created for a state proposal, communitarian,

[44] The legislative recognition of *usos y costumbres* was in the interests of Oaxacan indigenous movements of the 1980's and 1990's and the governor had a wide popular backup in 2001, when refusing to reform federal constitutional renovations weakening the position of indigenous peoples (Anaya Muñoz 2006, 128-137).

[45] Programa de Inclusión Social, Program for Social Inclusion

indigenous organization CORENCHI is not unique in the mountain regions of Oaxaca, but there have been in the recent decades similar kind of communal, state implemented projects in several localities (Recondo 2007, 115). The meanings and forms that these projects take in different regions are as unique and varying as the communities themselves[46].

My reconstruction of the critical period of time in the 1990's in Chinantla is based on my conversations with the community members and biologists that have at some point worked in the zone, but mainly on the conversations and interviews that I had with the former administrator from the Mexican Environmental Ministry, working in the region since the described time. This information is complimented with the available literature considering the region, written at the time or afterwards.

Development of nature protection towards the conservation program in Chinantla started out in 1993 with the entrance of PAIR-UNAM (Programa de Aprovechamiento Integral de Recursos Naturales de la UNAM, Integral Profit of the Natural Resources Program of the National Autonomous University of Mexico). This program was financed by the former Mexican Ministry of Agriculture, INI, Oaxacan state government and private foundations (CONANP 2005, 22). PAIR-UNAM was invited to the region by CEPCO (Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca, Coordinator for Coffee Producers in the State of Oaxaca). CEPCO, union conformed by small independent coffee producers in 1989, was created in response to the crisis confronted by coffee cultivators in 1985, when the price of coffee dropped and the earlier governmental actors and aid were withdrawn. In 1993 PAIR-UNAM entered to work first in the community of Santa Cruz Tepetotutla with the local co-operative Luz de la Chinantla (Light of Chinantla) in order to create viable options for coffee production (Sesia 2002, 31-34).

Apart from coffee producers of CEPCO, PAIR-UNAM worked in co-operation with different academic actors: the appendix between study (mostly biological) and conservation was formed already at the time[47]. PAIR-UNAM formed co-operation with

[46] Interesting comparisons are provided for an example from the communities of Sierra Sur and Juárez that received institutional support to organize themselves in terms of forest exploitation resulting as the communal enterprise U.E.E.A.F.C. (San Pedro el Alto, Sierra Sur) and the communal civil organization UZACHI (Sierra Juárez). See CAMAFU; CCMSS 2017; García Osorio 2009.

[47] See studies conducted in the region at the time: Díaz-Pardo et al. 1995; Rincón Gutiérrez 2011; Van Der Wal 1999.

the faculty of anthropology of UAM Iztapalapa[48] in order to send students to do social investigation in the communities. Interviewed Ministry administrator, working for PAIR-UNAM at the time describes the process: "*So then we practically had some presence already through the projects that we were promoting or through these studies of anthropological character, which provided us information of the characteristics of the organizations and of the communities of the region. Well, we started to have a contact with all these communities*." At the time of the entrance, a huge importance was put upon individuals of the local co-operative. Don Pedro Osorio, the first president of CORENCHI explains: "*The work that I did was to sensitize. The communities. Then the work was to go to each one of the communities. Speak to them how important it was to organize us. In the first place to be in contact with the ones, who were communal authorities. And at some point, we passed to the communal assemblies to speak*" [49]. Why PAIR eventually ended its work in these communities was because it started to face troubles in the communal assemblies: community members saw that the projects were benefitting only the members of the co-operative. Another reason was that many of the people from PAIR-UNAM entered to work in the new environmental ministry, SEMARNAP, set up in 1995.

Interviewed administrator describes his work in SEMARNAP in 1995 in the following way: "…*Part of my activities was to encourage sustainable production and conservation*," but also to define "regions of priority" for conservation into which to canalize public funding (see CONANP 2005). At this time Chinantla is included to rural development program PRODERS[50] of SEMARNAP and defined as "a region of priority to conservation". In the study to define "regions of priority", the reasons for including Chinantla are mentioned to be the richness in flora and fauna and the environmental problematics existent in the zone due to earlier unsustainable cultivation methods. At the time of the study, two thirds of the total superficial area of Chinantla is declared as fragmented. The conclusion of the study to determine "regions of priority" is to favour zones, that are not yet fragmented, such as territories of the communities of CORENCHI. "Territorial order" (*ordenamiento territorial comunitario*), the rules for sustainable use

[48]Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, La Unidad Iztapalapa**,** Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa

[49] About the importance of local *caciquismo* in the entrance of state programs, see Aguirre Beltrán 1979, 8; Recondo 2007, 65. About pre-Hispanic traditions of *caciquismo* in Chinantla, see de Teresa 2011, 49.

[50] Programas de Desarrollo Sustentable**,** Programs for Sustainable Development

of territory as a condition to receive benefits from nature conservation of Santa Cruz Tepetotutla are conformed as part of the programs provided by the Ministry[51].

"*And that's when I arrive to the region again now without the government. I enter with Geo to the region again in 2002*," the Ministry administrator concludes. Geoconservación civil organization is created in 2000 in order to canalize monetary funds and to act as mediator between state institutions and the communities. This NGO enters to work with the communities in 2002 with the programs of Integral Management of Ecosystems (Manejo Integral de Ecosistemas), communal agreements on conservation and, finally, payments for ecosystem services. Communities entered into a new era of forest conservation, following the crisis in coffee production as the main economic activity and a vacuum of direct institutional presence of the abstract state in the zone at the time that airplanes did not pass any more to pick up coffee harvests. In the next chapter, I will move on to examine this entrance of conservation more from the communities' own point of view by situating the project as part of the local worldview and belief system.

[51] PROCYMAF (Proyecto de Conservación y Manejo Sustentable de Recursos Forestales en México, Project for Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Mexico).

4. VISIONS ON NATURE

I am walking with Pancho close to the abandoned airstrip. I only knew it afterwards, when commenting erroneously that I had never seen the runway. "*But we went there the other day*." Wild grasses and leaves have taken over the space. This is where Pancho has his *tepejilote* parcels and mango trees. Pancho has fields on two opposite sides of the mountain. On the other side he has his pineapples, cattle and a little hut with a roof of *zacate*. The hut is an hour walk away from the community and the family used to stay there overnight, when working in the remote fields. We went there earlier in the week. This was the first time anyone visited the place after Pancho's and Juana's father was lost in the forest couple of weeks earlier to my arrival to San Pedro. The old man had taken a head start leaving his wife still to work in the field. After his disappearance people started to avoid that side of the mountain.

In this chapter my aim is, besides seeking answers to the mystery of the disappearance of the old man, to discuss my second research question of the shared communal ideas on nature and, how these ideas have changed through different, syncretic, processes and contact with outside actors, especially through the nature conservation project. This way I will present changes in local environmental understandings as part of a wider historical framework. I will lean on ideas of Oaxacan anthropologist Alicia Barabas (2016, 52) on construction of "ethnoterritories", understood as collective ideas considering the relation between society and environment based on a common history and shared myths and rules of the use and inhabiting of these meaningful spaces.

By the examination of communal narratives as told and interpreted today we can better understand the current attitudes towards conservation, state contact, global economy and money. In this chapter, my aim is to make the entrance of conservation and differing attitudes towards it more understandable from the communities' own point of view, different from the institutional overview presented in the previous chapter. Through stories and visions on environmental change I hope to situate conservation as a more compatible and, in the case of San Pedro, conflicting part of the continuum of events. I will borrow the concept of "indigenous analysis" from environmental anthropologist Stuart Kirsch (2006) to explain local alternative interpretations of relations and historical processes describing environmental and social changes.

Although I strongly suggest understanding conservation in Chinantla as a somehow "natural" continuum of long standing syncretic processes in the communities and as understandable in the light of narratives reflecting local values and worldviews, in the end of this chapter, I will still further contrast local ideas with the new and questioned ones of money brought with the nature conservation program. This was more evident in San Pedro, where attitudes towards the project and money are more ambiguous than in Analco and I will make a slight comparison between the two communities' motivations to participate in the program. Even I this way distinguish two worldviews, the local one and the one of the more commercially and scientifically oriented conservation program, I will not take the theoretical conversation towards an ontological analysis of considering these differing views as representative of separate worlds. I realize that many of the features of my field context are descriptive of Viveiros de Castro's (2004) and Descola's (2013) ideas of a classical Amerindian animistic ontology, but for the differing focus of my study I will not go more into this in my analysis. Relevant comparison could also be made with anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena's (2015) views on Peruvian ontologies adapting to environmentalist discourses on nature as means of social protest. Still, in this study my focus is more in the analysis of social relations conforming environmental protection and control. Understanding places, and in this case "territories", like anthropologist Aletta Biersack (2006, 16) as relational (both locally and globally) and as socially and historically construed, it is relevant to see territories and their spatial and symbolic transformations through processes of interactions with outsiders and through an analysis of motives of different actors (Stasch 2013, 556).

4.1. Territorial changes

"*It has already been a month that the old man got lost in the forest. Who knows, who has taken him…*"

The villagers in San Pedro wandered, although all of them seemed to have an unspoken opinion of what had really happened to the old man. The day of the disappearance, all the community members went up to the mountain to look for *el señor*.

"*He was eaten by a jaguar*,"

some of them would say with a twinkle in the eye. There was absolutely no clue of the old man and for the absence of his clothes, the little back, *morral*, and machete he was carrying, it was obvious that a jaguar or another animal had not attacked the old man on his way.

"*He already walked like that! Talking crazy things…"*

Was the answer, when I asked if the elderly man could have gone lost. Community members denied this by reclaiming that the area was well searched the day of the disappearance.

"*He was taken by two quadrate children. They have their feet upside down and eat crabs and suck your blood. I by myself have also seen them*."

I was confirmed that the old man was taken by *chaneques*, mean and child-like inhabitants and caretakers of water sources.

Chaneques and other inhumane inhabitants of Chinantec forests can be seen as regulating the humane behaviour in this space as do, in a different way, the rules of the conservation program as well. In the following discussion, I will introduce the rules imposed by the conservation program and the local indigenous earlier and parallel ways of regulating the forest and the use of natural resources. I will present the forms of territorial regulation as part of what Alicia Barabas (2006) sees as "syncretic transformations, reconfigurations and sanctification of ethnoterritories", these meaningful and even sacred territories resulting from the social production of a space. I will follow the ideas of anthropologist Paige West (2006, 27, 229) suggesting to consider establishment of a nature conservation zone as part of this kind of social production of spaces.

Syncretic construction of meaningful territories

"*When Lucio's father had migrated to work in the United States, would a shooting star always stop above the house of his spouse. It is said that people that have migrated become naguales, stars above their homesteads. Lucio's father never confessed that the star was actually him, they [naguales] are not allowed to expose themselves*." (Fieldnotes, the 4th of June 2016).

When talking about syncretism, I refer to the definition of Alicia Barabas (2006, 17, 119) of dynamic processes of adaptation, integration and reinterpretation taking place in the course of history and, as suggested by Paige West (2006, 12), including modern phenomena, such as migration or nature conservation, participating this way in the social construction of places and territories. I do not refer to imposed changes in which a new way of doing or seeing things intents to overrule the earlier one, as in the examples of the previous chapter on state control: pre-Hispanic and conservation zone maps or contradicting federal and communal legislations. Instead I do refer to mixing of earlier believes, worldviews and customs or ways of doing things with the more recent ones. An example of this is how the Chinantec belief in *nagualismo,* certain persons' capacity to transform themselves into natural beings, has incorporated into and mixed with the phenomenon of migration that has become more common only during the last few decades (Márquez & Meyer 2010, 474). Same kind of mixing has happened in the case of another recent process: that of nature conservation. Here I will discuss the dedication to nature conservation as a syncretic way of valuing, regulating, protecting or even sanctifying the meaningful territorial space and natural resources, especially water, in the communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco.

"*Today in the late evening I entered to the Pentecostalist church. People preyed for the son of the common goods officer and for me as well. Pastor mentions the importance of helping the electoral candidate that spoke in the community earlier today. It is lightning outside and the air is heavy of the tropical heat. I prefer sitting in the last line of the church than alone in the communal cottage. The pastor, Don Agustin, says that before people were worshipping images. "God gave the landscape, the air, God gave the water, God gave so that we have something to eat, the sun, the moon, the rain. God gave water." Several environmental items are mentioned, water twice. "Before there was a law that we needed to sacrifice twice a day to God: animals, big, fat animals and meat. It was not possible. God already took this law away. Not only here in San Pedro, but in the whole world. God already took that law away."* (Fieldnotes, the 19th of May 2016).

Syncretism is not a new phenomenon, as demonstrated in the case of *usos y costumbres* in the previous chapter. Barabas (2006) uses conversion to Christian religions as an example of the process of changes and mixing of different "cosmovisions"[52]. To her

[52] Refers to mythical worldview, used especially when talking about Mesoamerican indigenous cultures.

views on territory and religion form an important element in the construction of ethnoterritoriality. Before Christian conversion Chinantec territories were inhabited by spirits and masters, *Dueños*, of places. Rains securing good harvest were asked with festivities and sacrifices: "*Noo, estee, we don't know more of the story of us as the already passed people do know it. They had their Gods because… Well, we don't know why, pues. They had the God of corn. They celebrated. For the harvest, for the corn, that everything. We already don't know… Because we already don't know how many millions of years ago it was,"* I was commented by *comunero* Maurilio in San Pedro on a small item, the God of corn (*Díu³ Ku²i³*), found during the construction of the primary school and now located in a small community museum.

During the Christian conversion, many of the old deities, such as the sun and the moon, these "several environmental items" mentioned by Don Agustin in the Mass, continued to co-exist with the Catholic God and Saints till today (Barabas 2006, 125). Communities were nominated Patron Saints, whose festivities replaced the pre-Hispanic celebrations of harvest and water of the agricultural calendar (Barabas 2004, 88; Merrifield 1967, 194). For an example in Catholic Analco, the celebration of Saint Anthony the 13th of June coincides with the beginnings of the rainy season. An interesting feature is that the presence of the spirits of nature, such as *chaneques* and *naguales*, is more recognized in San Pedro, where people are divided by four different Christian religions. In the Evangelic churches, previous Catholic habits, such as "worshipping images", are disapproved, but at the same time popular beliefs and belief in the creatures of the forest are not contradicted by the religion. In Analco, attitudes towards religion and nature are more secular and practical. In San Pedro, Saint Peter was named as the Patron Saint after his apparition in the communal lands (Merrifield 1967, 194). Alicia Barabas (2006, 211) considers these kind of Christian apparitions as a way of sanctifying the meaningful spaces of communal territories again in the course of changing, religious visions to the world.

I would suggest expanding the argument of Barabas about Christian conversion as a way of new territorial sanctification in an era of changing values to the nature conservation project as well, making it to seem not only as an imposed way of outside control, but also as a syncretic result of making the values of indigenous territory and nature to meet better today's worldviews and ways of environmental appreciation and appropriation. In this context conservation becomes almost "religion-like" instead of "our

government" as in the study of Paige West (2006) amongst the Gimi of Papua New Guinea or as in the previous chapter about state control. The new objects of worship in "conservation as religion" are not *Dueños,* neither Catholic Saints, but instead endangered species such as jaguar or captured CO^2 carbon dioxide that come to co-habit Chinantec territories together with the earlier deities. This way I would like to see that in their adaptation to changing world orders, Chinantecs have found ways to maintain and reproduce their relation to the sacred and appreciated territory and its natural beings.

"*We're rich in nature, but poor in money*," Ernesto, separating corn grains in front of his house, tells me in San Pedro on our last talk, when I am visiting his family during my second stay in the community. Environmental anthropologist Michael Dove (1998, 48) has argued that sustainability is an ability to change rather than something static and fixed. In my opinion, this ability to change in order to reach "sustainability" or, in this case the precedent sanctification of territorial order, is well present in Chinantecs' syncretic adaptations to different world orders. This and my other arguments showing Chinantec appreciation towards their natural environments are contrary to many that I heard from different biologists, commenting on people's will to participate in the program only for monetary payments. It is also contrary to an understanding of conservation only as a relation of dependence and imposition of public authority. Instead, I situate Chinantlan conservation in its historical and mythological context seeking this way to reason not only communities' will to participate in the program, but also the good and sustainable state of CORENCHI communities' forests, contradicting with the general tendencies of the degraded region. Barabas (2006, 260) argues that conversion to a new worldview, being it truly religious or "conservation as religion", is about cultural transformation and conflict at the same time. Adaptation to new world orders is negotiated in relation to different outside actors, such as governmental institutions, and their conditions, which will be discussed here in terms of territorial regulation.

Territorial regulation

"*Pues, este, there are rules. Estee and to not make bush fire, to not throw garbage, to not contaminate the water. Guard, not rozar, clear and burn, where the streams are born. All of that. Not rozar there, to guard the environment, pues…"* (CORENCHI delegates in San Pedro Tlatepusco).

- *"To guard and to do 'guardarayas'."*

- *"It needs to be a wide 'guardaraya', five meters of water surrounding the burning field. And to put 10, 12… 15 mozos, persons to help."*

- *"A-ha, and to prohibit to go hunting animals. To not dump trees. To not make fire. Bush fire, pues. To take care of the water, more than anything else. A-ha."* (Don Agustin and Don Felipe in San Pedro Tlatepusco).

Here, I will examine territorial regulations and rules for forest use imposed by the conservation program and by the communities, inclined to the mythical worldview and spirits of the forest. I will present two specific instances, sowing and hunting regulations, in which the rules of the communities and of the program are in a constant state of negotiation and conflict. Of course, other examples can be found and some of them were already discussed in the earlier chapter, like the forced social participation of women in governmental programs contradicting with the local customs of *usos y costumbres.*

Rules of the government on the use of territory and natural resources are defined by the responsible institutions, CONANP and CONAFOR, and declared in written documents, the so called "basic folder" (*carpeta básica)* including a territorial order (*ordenamiento territorial)* and a communal statement (*estatuto comunal)* that the communities of CORENCHI need to possess as a condition for joining the program. Realization is watched over during regular visits of institutional representatives and violations are sanctioned as in the case of prohibited "land use changes" in the conservation zone. If the environmental Ministry SEMARNAT is not informed about a change in land use, the communities will be charged an amount of three million Mexican pesos[53]. Analco has been permitted two years earlier to my research, in 2014, the construction of a road to the neighbouring community of San Antonio del Barrio, opening them a connection to Oaxaca de Juárez. As the project has not advanced, the community is regularly charged for their permission: "*We have a permission, because yaa, it's going to be a land use change in there. Ya estee SEMARNAT, ya in two occasions we have*

[53] About 160 000 eur at the time.

needed to, ya: pay for them. Also, SEMARNAT is charging us for that! For the first transfer, we paid almost 200 000 pesos[54]*,*" Gustavo explains.

At the same time communities have their own rules, different from the ones imposed by the government, considering their territory and land use. Territories are guided by spirits in between humane and natural such as *chaneques* protecting waters, *Dueños* living inside mountain caves and shape-shifting *naguales.* The road leading to Usila from San Pedro is believed to be inhabited by several spirits chasing a lonely pedestrian. This is why people prefer not to take the road alone, especially during the night time. In this road just before entering to the municipal center, you would pass by a jaguar head, five or six times of the size of a human one, carved in to the rocky mountain wall. On the other side of Río Tlatepusco, there rises a sharp mountain. Inside this rock there is said to be a cave of "20 municipalities" inhabited by *naguales*, having their feasts around a rocky table in the light provided by a piece of diamond hanging above. A staircase and deep, narrow tunnels leave from the room, where *naguales* are said to gather for feast. "*They're normal people, they're some of us, they have a double spirit*," people in San Pedro comment on *naguales.*

Spirits guiding forests are there to regulate villagers' moving in the communal territories and the use of natural resources, especially water. Like government institutions, also the spirits inhabiting Chinantec territory punish for wrong or unsustainable use, for excessive hunting for an example. This is why people see some of the spirits as "a bit evil", "*son un poco malos también".* In San Pedro, an old granny, *abuelito,* living in Camila's and Ernesto's house used to spend his days sitting at the edge of his bed and staring with glimmering and empty eyes. *Abuelito* was lost a couple of years ago and reported by the CORENCHI radio connection as being found in Nopalera del Rosario, Valle Nacional. *Abuelito* told that he was taken through Usila by flying to the other municipality. Few weeks after he had been found and returned with his relatives, the spouse of the old man died. Before dying, the spouse said that her husband had "given her". "*Abuelito was taken by bad people*," Camila tells me. *Chaneques?* "*I think so*". It is common to think that *chaneques* and *Dueños* ask for bribes and sacrifices for letting go a person that has been taken by them (Barabas 2006, 84, 103, 187). "*They're part of the nature, as jaguars are part of the nature*," I am told in San Pedro. Belief in spirits of the

[54] Around 11 000 eur in 2016. Money for the project has been guaranteed by a private politician from Jalapa de Díaz.

forest is more present and openly expressed in an everyday manner in San Pedro than in Analco, where young people, as told by themselves, "do not have knowledge any more" or do not think that these spirits exist in their community (an answer that I received, when I asked the community members whether for an example *naguales* would exist).

Conservation has brought changes into the ways that people are permitted to use their territorial lands and resources by regulating the use of these in a manner seemingly distant from the communal manners. I will take two examples considering the theme of subsistence strategies: sowing and hunting wild animals. The rules imposed by the conservation program define how large areas can be dedicated to cultivation in each community. Hunting wild animals and having cattle and chicks walking free in the urban areas are prohibited. I will now discuss these changes in the communal regulation of natural resources and subsistence with some examples.

"*Besides everything else, I'd say that before we were allowed to hunt animals. That was our practice of us. Because earlier you were allowed to hunt deer, badgers, how do you call it… Tepezcuintle! Pacas. My grandfather got… One, two, three deer every day! Sí, that was our daily diet of us, who were his grandchildren. Sí, he told us a lot of stories pues and and… Ahorita he is not here anymore."* Lucio's grandfather was an important and honoured man in San Pedro and used to go hunting animals. "*He hunted a lot, because he was of the naguales,"* substituting common goods officer Maurilio reinforces playfully. Conservation rules prohibiting to hunt wild animals or even to let dogs free in the communities of CORENCHI share opinions in each one of the localities. It is only allowed to slay animals that cause damage in cultivation zones, *milpas.* "*Here are badgers, wild boar, squirrels. Squirrels. A-ha, and este paca,"* Don Agustin, San Pedro Tlatepusco, lists animals causing harm to cultivated plants. Hunting restrictions share opinions in both of the communities, but especially in San Pedro: "*Some people, sí, some people got irritated. They say what they say. Dice: How come you say that we are going to stop hunting animals. 'Aaa, bueno', people said, 'The ones that make damage, yes. Vamos, we are going to catch and kill the ones that make damage'. Los dañeros. But the ones, that don't make damage, we'll leave them free… But then, de repente, suddenly: there is a pheasant!"* Don Agustin describes the earlier custom of eating pheasant, a desired prey, in San Pedro.

In both of the communities, villagers have started to feel that, as a result of the conservation program and the hunting ban, jaguars are moving now closer to the urban zones of the communities. This is not good, as jaguars are also seen as "a bit evil" and there are no certainty of pre-conservation adoration or respect towards the great felines. A couple of years back in San Pedro, community members put up festivities to celebrate *Díu³ Ku²i*³ and jaguar. Same night jaguar attacked the cattle in the further *potreros,* pasture zones. Now villagers would not put up festivities for jaguar and the God of corn anymore. "*They walk really close already. They are taking advantage of the things that we should be consuming. And now that the dogs are tied, what the jaguars are doing is getting closer to the village,"* Abelino comments in San Antonio Analco; approaching jaguars have been noted in his community as well.

Certification of conserved areas has limited the zones dedicated to cultivation and this has affected especially in Analco, where the total amount of territory is smaller and, as villagers comment to me, some of the most fertile cultivation zones close to the border with el Barrio are now destined to conservation. In San Pedro, where communal territory is wider, large parts of the conserved forest were untouched already from before. I asked Don Agustin in San Pedro, why they did not cultivate in the untouched forest zones, the so called "virgin forests": "*Because that's where the water is born. We… That's where the water is born*." I was many times emphasized the importance of water and especially the protection of its primary sources of being born close to the community. "*That is what we appreciate. What we appreciate is water. Because without water we cannot live. Verdad, truth? It's not possible. We are trying to take a lot of care of water,"* Don Agustin in San Pedro Tlatepusco explains, why people are since ancient times, long before the conservation, used to not clean cultivation zones, *rozar*, where the water springs "are born". "*Firstly, for that and secondly because it's far away there,"* Don Agustin reasons. Not to use certain available resources is thus not only for their unattainability, but also for the respect towards these natural elements and for the local regulation based on belief on natural spirits, for an example water guiding *chaneques.* Stuart Kirsch has conducted ethnographic fieldwork amongst Yonggom of Papua New Guinea and sees that an animistic relationship between nature and society, different from the one we have in western cultures and similar to the Chinantec worldviews, is connected to sustainable management of natural resources and land use. This is for the "interagentivity" innate to this kind of a close and twinkled relationship. (Kirsch 2006, 77.) In Chinantla, this is

expressed as a high appreciation towards water and in the importance put into the protection of it. I was many times addressed questions: "*In other parts of the world there is no clean water like this, verdad? In your country there is water? There is river? …There is clean water like this in there?*"

"We are discussing on Don Agustin's son's experience of working in the US:

- *Son: In San Antonio, Texas. And California, nothing else. No, no, not a long time. Four years, not more.*
- *Xóxhitl (from California herself): What was the work?*
- *Son: To make 'albergas'. In construction. A-ha, 'piscina', 'alberga', where you swim. How they called it there... Este, 'pul'? 'Puul'. A-ha.*
- *Xóchitl: In Texas, right?*
- *Son: Sí.*
- *Xóchitl: Yes, because there is not so much water in Texas.*
- *Don Agustin (laughing happily): That's what they do in places, where there is no water!"*

(Conversation on water with Don Agustin, his son and Xóchitl in San Pedro Tlatepusco).

In both of the communities it is mentioned that certain species, for an example *frijol mayeso* beans that prefer cool terrain of the altitudes, cannot be cultivated outside the highest mountains pertaining to conservation and the species have been lost for that. Beans, beans with banana, beans with yucca, beans with *quelites…* Beans in any given form are part of the most common everyday diet in San Pedro[55]. Since the conservation project started this traditional cultivable is more and more often bought from a communal shop or from Usila than grown in *milpas.* This is due to various reasons, including the lost of the type *mayeso,* but also for the easiness of buying beans from the store with the money given for conservation. Also, the work load needed for cleaning beans without using many pesticides is mentioned to be a lot and frustrating. Other species that are recognized as lost or difficult to cultivate in the conditions of current cultivable zones are chili, *jicama* and a type of melon that "had a red skin and was yellow from inside and does not have a name even in Chinantec". Difficulties in cultivating one of the basic crops,

[55] Using a method of free listing in San Pedro's neighbouring community Santiago Tlatepusco Ibarra & al. (2011, 323) also noted black beans as the most consumed aliment only after in every meal served handmade *tortillas*.

beans, can still the most clearly be connected to the changes brought to *milpas* by the conservation project.

4.2. Indigenous analysis on environmental change

”*Israel, Juana and Ana are having dreams on the faith of the lost old man. For a time, he was looked by the whole community, but never a sign was found. His daughters and sons were bothered by the disappearance and travelled to see a fortune-teller, who red them cards and assured that their father was in peace. In the night, we are sitting in two hammocks in the house of the spouse of the lost old man. Juana draws a circle with her toe to the humid ground and tells how bothered she'd been on thinking about the disappearance of her father and how she feels that he is still alive. She tells me how all of them have been dreaming on him. In some dreams, their father appears dressed in a suit, this way different from how they used to know him. And in some he has gone with the animals of the mountain:*

'He appears between these straws that look like milpa, in between cactuses, and tells me that it's good to eat the same things that the animals eat and takes a bite of the straws and disappears again.'" (Fieldnotes, the 1st of June 2016).

In this subchapter, I will discuss "indigenous analysis" on environmental change. The concept is originally applied by Stuart Kirsch (2006, 3) referring to the local, indigenous interpretations of political relationships and historical events. Kirsch demonstrates how these interpretations, alternative to the dominating western (or *mestizo)* ones shape communities' interactions with outside actors, such as representatives of the state and global economy (ibid., 1). These alternative interpretations help communities to respond to contemporary challenges and to take political actions (ibid., 2). I will examine how Chinantec interpretations, present stories, beliefs and myths still told in the communities, have helped them to respond their current challenges, to participate in state and global economy relations from their own location in the current world order in order to, as suggested by Kirsch, "fulfil the circumstances already present in their myths" (ibid., 141). This way I will weight the motivations to participate in conservation and the local territorial control realized through this participation. I will present differences between the two communities, Analco and San Pedro, and through these differences, in much part

cumulating from the strong religious conversion in San Pedro, try to justify and reason the differences in communities' attitudes towards conservation. Of course, reasons cannot be sought solely from the mythical indigenous worldview, but instead these form part of a larger whole involving also global, political and power dynamics and individual actors' desires, more discussed in the next chapter 5.

When first arriving to Analco, I was troubled and interested in the seemingly lacking traditional Chinantec myths that I was familiar with already from my first visits to Santa Cruz and el Barrio in 2014 and for reading the collection of Weitlaner (1977). In Analco, these narratives did not seem to form part of the everyday experience of people any more unlike more so in the other communities of CORENCHI and, as I later on learned, in San Pedro as well. When establishing myself more in the communities, I became to realize that I should not seek the type of myths presented in earlier studies, but instead, recognizing the dynamic nature of indigenous cultures and cosmovisions, try to understand local views through contemporary narratives that have gone through, especially in San Pedro, strong waves of religious conversion and other syncretic processes. Indigenous narratives change over time due to political, economic and environmental transformations. Even so they urge to make sense of these same changes and larger historical processes of which they form part of and, by following local logics, they explain why things have turned out as they are. (West 2006, 59-60.)

Contemporary narratives and stories intent to explain historical events and environmental changes and catastrophes and make these events, sometimes unfortunate as disappearance of all the fishes or banning hunting wild animals, more understandable in the local context to form, somehow even harmoniously, part of the historical and mythical sequence of events. As Paige West (2006, 21) explains how our present grows from the past and we remember the past depending upon our present experiences and expectations for the future, the classic Chinantec myths have undergone transformations, describing local experiences of the past decades, the time period possible to consider in this study. To this process of making contemporary events understandable from the local point of view, I refer with Kirsch's term "indigenous analysis" on environmental and social change. I will reflect this concept together with the ideas of "sacred ethnoterritory" of Alicia Barabas and make slight comparisons with studies on conservation and indigenous peoples in Papua New Guinea by anthropologist Paige West (2006).

Stuart Kirsch (2006, 140) defines myth as a mode of indigenous analysis that interprets history in terms of social relations referring to the collective character of indigenous worldviews. These worldviews form part of cosmovisions, which Mexican historian Alfredo López Austin (2012, 12) understands as perceptions of the world ruled by traditions and directing human actions by being present in every activity of social life. Alicia Barabas (2006, 111) has studied Chinantec cultures and worldviews widely and suggests that the myths of the zone are informative for an example of relations between different communities. Through my reflection on Chinantec myths describing and culturally resolving environmental change and conflict, I would like to, again, extend her ideas to cover conservation and relations to external actors, such as state, environmentalists and global economy.

Besides resolving environmental changes and processes in the communities, I find local myths and narratives descriptive of the motivations for participating in the conservation program. Myths and narratives also explicate some of the notable differences in the attitudes of the two communities. To explain this, I will present here narratives from both of the communities and the differences, not only in the distinct attitudes they represent, but also in their differing concrete characteristics must be noted. In Analco, narratives and beliefs part of the "traditional" Chinantec worldview (see for an example Weitlaner 1977; Barabas 2006) are not so visibly present in the daily experience, the current narratives are more concrete and many times educational[56]. Conservation and environmentalist discourses have more foothold in Analco than in San Pedro. In San Pedro, religious syncretism and conversion are strongly present in the narratives and these tend to mix with the still quite present typically Chinantec beliefs in nature spirits. In both of the cases stories and narratives are informative of real life experiences, even there are differences in their seeming mysticality.

All the narratives presented here, except for the one shared by Don Anselmo Manuel, an elderly *comunero* from Analco, were told spontaneously in informal conversations. Narratives shared by Don Anselmo Manuel instead came up in a recorded interview that I conducted after having heard that this elderly *comunero* still liked to share myths and stories that are already uncommon to younger generations of community

[56] For an example in Analco a common story, which I heard several times during my stay, is a moral one about a boy who did not behave well and was eaten by a jaguar. His bones are found in a cave, close to one of the streams surrounding the community.

members. Paige West (2006, 139) in her own investigation amongst the Gimis notes that the institutional accounts, like the one I was given by the administrator from the Mexican Environmental Ministry, are different from the local views on how conservation begun. Here, through several narratives describing environmental and social change, I will try to situate conservation in the Chinantec cosmovision and present a parallel view to the more institutional one of how conservation begun in Chinantla.

Stolen fishes and water, myths describing modern technological changes

"*Disappearance of the fishes… From 12 to 13 years ago. 'But it was not because of the dam Cerro de Oro,' Pancho says and explains to me: Three señores, well, two señores and one señora from Nopalera del Rosario died. Before dying they said that in Nopalera a lot of animals, fishes, will be shown up. And all the fishes from the river disappeared and they went to Nopalera. 'In Nopalera there are fishes.'"* (Pancho's explanation, why there are not anymore fishes in Río Tlatepusco, San Pedro).

Hydroelectric dam Miguel de la Madrid or, more popularly Cerro de Oro, is located in the river valley of Papaloapan, close to the city of Tuxtepec. Construction works of the dam were initiated in 1973 and the production of electricity commenced in 1989. As a consequence of closing the dam and the following floods, approximately 30 000 persons from the communities of Lower Chinantla were relocated in Veracruz[57]. Besides, dam affected local life in the municipalities of Ojitlan and Usila. Migratory fishes could not come up anymore and these municipalities, earlier enjoying large draughts of fish and crayfish[58], were little by little left without this resource of both nutritional and cultural importance. (Bartolomé & Barabas 1997, 79; Díaz-Pardo et al. 1995; 7-8, 18.) Still, the communities of the municipality of Valle Nacional, like Nopalera del Rosario, continue enjoying good caught of fish.

[57] Miguel Bartolomé and Alicia Barabas have written extensively about the forced migration following the closure of the dam. See Bartolomé & Barabas 1997; Bartolomé & Barabas 1990.

[58] Community members in San Pedro, closer to the river, can still identify at least 3 species of crayfish (*cac-mó* = "lobster", *ta³j-mo¹a* or "*camaron 3*" and *ta-qu¹á*) and several species of fish (including *jó* = local trout) that were present before the closure of the dam. More on the scientific variation and on the institutional actions taken as preparation for the diminishing fish resources in the study conducted by PAIR-UNAM, see Díaz-Pardo et al. 1995.

An institutional account of the events tells the story with the same conclusion, but based on scientific and technological knowledge: "*But yes, it was obvious [that the fish would disappear]: if you close the path for the fish that including some go as far as to reach the connection with the sea and then return to the higher parts. For an example, you cannot find anymore, well many species, but one that is really well known and you still can find in the parts of the river that go down, este, there around Nopalera del Rosario. It's, estee, the local trout. The native trout,"* I was explained by the former administrator from SEMARNAT, almost annoyed by my naivety, when asking, provocatively, whether there could be yet another reason than the dam for the disappearance of the fishes in the municipality of Usila[59]. "*Yes, it's very evident. It's practically that the species do their natural migration from higher waters to lower waters… And when they would need to go on their continuous route, pues, there is a dam and a wall that practically… They can go down for the outlet and the gravity, pues… But they cannot go up anymore."* It is not so much significant to know whether the fishes went to Nopalera because of the construction of the dam "affecting the hydrological cycles of tributary rivers" or for the mandate of the two dying *señores* and *señora* (see Díaz-Pardo et al. 1995, 18). Significant is the way in which Chinantecs experience and speak of the technological phenomenon affecting their territory and life and how a mythical reconstruction of the events is here applied to describe modern environmental and technological changes.

Stuart Kirsch (2006, 102) presents another example based on his studies amongst the Yonggom people of Papua New Guinea. In this case western technology is seen as a form of local magic and the relationship between people and the contaminating mine is reflected on local views and belief in sorcery (ibid., 6). Alicia Barabas reports similar kind of indigenous analysis, a mix of current technological phenomenon and classic Chinantec myths, from the municipality of Ojitlan, where she has conducted fieldwork in the regions affected by the construction of the dam Cerro de Oro. For an example in Ojitlan it is believed that masters of the territory, *Dueños*, were the ones to punish for the territorial intrusion by the hydroelectric dam by taking life of hundreds of people (Barabas

[59] I was bothered by the issue as in the 3rd *feria* of biodiversity and Chinantec cultures I had come to know a man from the federal capital, hiking and non-academically studying communities of the region. His suggestion was that the fish had disappeared for environmental toxin DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) used for fumigation of mosquitoes spreading diseases in the 1940's and -50's. The same was once suggested by the PT party's campaign manager from the municipality of Usila.

2006, 44, 76). Similarly: a lightning was send topunish and to kill then the president Luis Echeverría, but apparently "the president was really well protected by the observers of lightning of another village: Mexico City" (ibid., 108). In the following subchapter, I will widen this idea of myths describing and resolving environmental conflicts, relations to the state and global economy and to the modern technology into the conservation program taking place in the communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco.

Master of all the animals, myths explaining conservation

"*Father of Mariana has killed a squirrel eating his milpa. Mariana tells that she remembers how her father used to go hunting wild animals before conservation started. Mariana's father also speaks about hunting. Before they used to go and hunt deer, pumas and armadillos. But people were not bothered by the hunting prohibition in Analco. Meanwhile Marina's mother has cleaned the squirrel, washed the tendinous animal with water and lime and put it in a spit next to the fire place. She has turned the skin right side up and worn it with senile to keep insects away. In couple of hours time we'll be eating squirrel again."* (Fieldnotes, the 12th of March 2016).

I was several times (with diverging opinions present, of course) addressed in Analco that people were not so much bothered for the hunting prohibition and other regulations brought by the conservation. I was convinced in various occasions that the community had already prohibited or regulated hunting for their own will before the program entered to the region. It had been noted that wild animals were getting scarce. Similar data is also presented in the thesis of Moreno Moncayo (2005, 52) compelled in various Chinantec communities, including Analco. I was told the following story about hunting wild animals by Don Anselmo Manuel:

"*Bueno, in the river you hunt fishes. A little time ago one was taken. Which year was it, but not a long ago. He who was taken, they were two. One entered and one doubted. They caught a lot of bobo fish. Big fishes, pues. They put dynamite to catch bobo. It's deep. And he went down, dice… And he arrived. And did not come back. He stayed for an hour...*

Dice: he did not die. He did not die, no. He arrived to a dry place, dice. There is Dueño, master of the animals, like they say that there is always a master of the animals. Because as it was his work, he killed a lot…

Dice: he arrived to a dry place. And there were a lot of wounded animals. That were hit by the dynamite, but it did not hit mero, mero. It did not hit there, there. They are wounded, the animals. And from there he arrived to where there is a lagoon, dice. There are the animals with wounds, hurt animals, animals that are from parts burned by the dynamite. Animals are called to go to this place, where they arrive pues… It's far. You always hurt an animal. The ones more far away are wounded, pues… With the powder, with the dynamite.

And there are a lot of animals. As he says, there are some big ones down there. It's deep. The accompanied thought that paisano already died. He stayed a while, a good while, he's not coming back. And no. Nononono, he didn't come back. He was there an hour, dice... Like three hours.

He went to a dry place, dice, it was not pure pure water. He entered to the water and arrived to a dry place. There is a world, a lagoon, where are the wounded animals. They put saliva to cure the animals, there were so many and many animals! How they are hurting, the animals. And... And... He came back, he lived a while in here. Dice, he did not go hunting any more for what happened to him, pues, we are not going to do this work anymore because we already saw how are the animals there. Hurt. Dice. He saw it. All the wounded animals, dice, as there is always a place where the animals go. There is Dueño. There are not endlessly animals: there is Dueño. The ones who live in the caves. That's what is said."

Don Anselmo Manuel's story is not particular only to Analco, but is actually one of the common, many times in different parts of Chinantla recorded myths telling about wound animals[60]. Teaching of the story is similar to the dream about the faith of Juana's father. This kind of stories from the region have been collected by Morena Moncayo (2005, 88-90) as well. Belief in masters of the animals, *Dueños,* and in natural, sacred spaces of water and mountain are also common for the region and described by Barabas. Caves and springs are seen as gates of transit to the world of *Dueños.* (Barabas 2006, 22, 40.)

"*There is a world*", as told by Don Anselmo Manuel. Narratives of encounters with *Dueños* imposing punishments for wrong management of territory and resources, like

[60] Fikret Berkes (2012, 111) finds common amongst at least northern indigenous groups the belief of disappearing animals going under water or under ground.

over-hunting, connect conservation to the local, mythical regulation by spirits inhabiting the territory. This way, as Kirsch suggests, local actions, in this case dedication to nature conservation, become to fulfil the circumstances that are already present in the myths. Together with the fact that hunting animals was diminished by the community's will already from before the conservation, this all makes the unifying and committed attitudes towards conservation in Analco more understandable and locally justified. More conflicting opinions towards conservation and the rules and regulations imposed by this in San Pedro will be examined in the following subchapter. I will be looking into San Pedro's prevalent religious conversion, evangelization and syncretic worldview in order to explain differences between the two communities.

Story of a village, evangelization and religious explanations to environmental change

"The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. What do ye imagine the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." (Nahum 1:7-10).

We are sitting in a dusky room, Esteban's figure dark against the open window letting the last rays of sunlight in. I have come to visit Esteban, pastor of the Baptist Evangelic church in San Pedro, as I was in the previous night's birthday gettogether invited to pass by. We have ended up in an hours lasting conversation on the Bible and history of the community of San Pedro and I am already starting to feel dizzy for the lessening light in the room. Esteban is familiar with wide parts of the Bible from memory and compares these with the story of the village. San Pedro was washed over by a deleterious flood in 1928. This led to the abandonment of the village for 20 years as the surviving community members left the locality and spread to different surrounding agencies. Many people migrated to San Juan Palantla, Valle Nacional, where the surviving Catholic relics were also taken. Esteban tells me that before the flood, people were celebrating their Catholic Saints, dancing and drinking. Again, a punishment was given, as in the case of territorial regulation by nature spirits. In the 1970's, 30 years after the new settlement in San Pedro begun to form, Evangelic religions started to enter and

ultimately to take hold on and formally divide the community into neighbourhoods and sects. In my opinion, strong Evangelic conversion influences the ways in which *tlatepusqueños* understand occurring environmental changes and catastrophes, as the drowning of their village. Strong belief in biblical prophecies results as different understandings of ongoing environmental processes that the conservation actors and the global REDD+ mechanism call "climate change" for instance. This leads to unsure, conflictive and even negative attitudes towards conservation.

"*Sometimes when it's time of warmth, it rains. And in the time of the rains, the weather is hot,"* CORENCHI delegates in San Pedro describe changes in climate, noted in both of the communities of this study. These have caused confusion in agricultural activities: "*Ahorita we don't know any more during which season to cultivate."* The amount of sun and rain during cultivation and growing of the harvest need to be exact. "*With hot weather milpa doesn't grow. Sí, it stays small, a lot of pests as well. These small worms that enter. From the point of the corn. It ends the point and, ya, milpa doesn't grow any more. But in the contrary, in rainy season, already this animalito does not enter anymore, because the water comes, there it fills with water and animalito goes,"* Mariano explains in San Pedro. Still, also too much of water brought by heavy rains, more common during recent years, in addition to problems caused to the transport[61], affect the harvest making it humid and spoilt. "*Now we don't cultivate like before anymore,"* Ernesto, San Pedro, concludes.

In both communities, I am explained that in order to get adequate harvest the summer sowing, *temporada*[62], has been changed from the tradition to cultivate the 1st of May (Analco) or the day of Saint Isidro, the 15th of May (San Pedro), till the mid or late June, following the changes in the beginning of seasonal rains. Still, people's perceptions of when the changes started to occur vary in these two communities sharing more or less same climate and environmental conditions and altitude. In the community of Analco, Pedro tells me that the date to sow corn *temporada* started to be shifted already 30 years earlier to my research. Changes in climate had been occurring already for a while and as the community continued to sow the 1st of May and suffered poor harvests, many community members decided to move to the region of Cerro Armadillo that has different

[61] It is common for heavy rains to leave the Chinantlan communities uncommunicated for times. During the rainy season in 2016, road and public transportation to Tuxtepec were cut of for weeks' time.
[62] The other yearly sowing, *tonamil,* situates in November-December.

climate conditions. In San Pedro, changes are dated only from 10 to 15 years back. Still, community members recall singular earlier epochs, when extreme climate conditions have affected the production of basic crops. CORENCHI delegates tell the following: "*Sí, because someone has said to us aaah, how do you say it… When it was a landslide, a lot of thunder, a lot of rain… There was a landslide in the road towards Santiago, when it closed the road… People did not have a lot to eat and during this time people ate banana roots. Because there was not a lot… Rain was damaging the corn and people did not have what to eat."*

Evangelic practitioners, almost everyone except for a couple of Catholics, in San Pedro connect the warming climate with the predictions of doom present in the Bible[63]. "*Hard times, tiempos difíciles, are coming*," seemed to be something of which the community members agreed of. "*'Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth'. The president of the federation has done an agreement with the pope that everyone needs to be Catholic. Everyone will be put a mark on the back of their wrist and the ones who don't want it will be persecuted. It's said: before the hard times come, the weather will start to get hot, extremely hot. We've never experienced this hot weather before*," Maurilio, the supply of common goods officer, tells me ominously and wiping sweat from his brow. It is night and the sun has already gone down, but the weather is still extremely hot and humid. People have gathered to lean on the staircase leading to the Pentecostalist church, a service is about to begin as every night. Alicia Barabas (2006, 265) makes a remark that in Chinantla observing omens of doom and of the end of the world is common especially amongst the Evangelic practitioners of the municipality of Usila. An interesting confluence between the local territorial regulation, conservation regulations and Evangelic, biblical narratives is present in the idea of punishment: "Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them… Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth," (Exodus 21:1-36). Interestingly, Barabas notes how it is common amongst indigenous narratives to express feelings of their proper guiltiness for the loss of natural resources and for environmental devastation (ibid., 112).

In San Pedro, I started to be doubtful, why the community even participates in the conservation program if they were so much convinced of the unpreventable end of the world and of the coming "hard times" and besides the program strongly divided opinions

[63] It is common amongst *tlatepusqueños* to cite especially Joel 1:15-20, the parts of the Bible speaking about the end of the world.

amongst community members. I started asking about this. Many of the community members expressed that there was nothing one could do in front of these devastating environmental changes. "*As Pontius Pilatus himself has said: 'what the sacred texts say, is not to be changed'*," Martín, pastor of the Seventh Day church confirms after a Saturday lecture on prophecies of Joel's book. Lucio, local CORENCHI technician and more enthusiastic about conservation than *tlatepusqueños* on an average, also a member of the Pentecostalist church, thinks about the issue and finally says that climate change and the end of the world are both predicted in the Bible and that is not to be changed. But, in his opinion, by conservation the process could be slowed down, even not prevented. I argue that the differences in attitudes towards conservation in more doubtful San Pedro and positive and optimistic Analco can partly be explained by the strong Evangelic conversion in the community of San Pedro, amongst other things that will be discussed more in the following analytical chapter 5.

Bees and (poisonous) honey, on conservation and local environmental knowledge

As discussed, indigenous knowledge and analysis on occurring environmental and social changes are different from the ones of the conservation program. This is visible in the variety of indigenous terminologies describing things and beings present in the territorial space, such as native bees. Stuart Kirsch (2006, 56) argues that indigenous analysis is a way to challenge dominant assumptions of capitalism, modernity and science. These colliding and at the same time syncretically combining ideas of indigenous and conservation's domains are visible in beekeeping. Commercial production of fair trade honey is part of the governmental projects implemented in the communities of CORENCHI. During my stay in Chinantla, beekeepers received also capacitation in native beekeeping. Difference in scientific knowledge and local knowledge is visible especially in the suspicion of "poisonous honey". Don Anselmo Manuel tells the following: "*A-ha. Dice, there were four persons sowing corn… Sowing, dice! There is a trunk of a tree. That has bees, dice. And and they drank honey. They took the honeys... And one drank honey and what he tells, dice: he exploited a lot… Because it's sweet, always everyone like it sweet. And he absorbed… One did not get any, this one got. One that absorbed a lot, they say; went down. He died. He fell down, like a drunk, pues... They tied him down, because he was doing like this: moving, doing it like crazy, dice. This*

honey is poisoned they say. It's not a long time ago, it's not a long time ago… For that reason, people say they're afraid of drinking this honey. He died and his face swelled and swelled. That's what is said."

Communities of CORENCHI form the only known zone where honey of some of the native bees is considered as harmful[64]. "Poisonous honey" is said to make one mad for a couple of days, as if one would be drunk. In both of the communities, honey of "the black melipona bee"[65] is considered as harmful and avoided by community members. In San Pedro, while sowing corn and annoyed by native bees sticking to our hair and ears, Israel tells me that they still used to drink the honey also from a hive of "the black bee", found in the field and now destroyed by the burning *rozo*. Israel's father further explains that not all the bees of the species produce honey that is poisonous. The bee needs to fill certain characteristics: carry "it's food with its feet" (instead of its back) and "enter to the hive backwards". Belief in "poisonous honey" seems to be regional, I am commented in San Pedro that even in Nopalera del Rosario of Valle Nacional, people have got sick of the honey. During my stay, couple of persons from the community of Santa Cruz were transferred to hospital. They had started to feel very ill after drinking honey of "the black melipona bee". Biologists working in the region and with the theme of native bees are of a different opinion: there should be no reason to consider this honey as poisonous. Recent intoxications were settled down with an explanation of diabetes. This might be so, but the difference in scientific and local knowledges and the experiences of illness are interesting.

Other than that, commercial ideas of the conservation project are visible in the production of honey of the introduced "African" or "European bees", an "enterprise-based approach" as suggested by West (2006, 8). In San Pedro, not forming part of the Union during my stay, I was commented that in the course of the years of environmental protection, there have been from two to three different projects trying to implement commercial honey production in the communities. This has been part of governmental efforts after the drop of coffee prices in the 1980's in order to provide new and possibly stable productive options. In the current project, provided by CONABIO (Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad, National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity), the communities each form their own enterprise,

[64] Weitlaner & Castro (1973, 260) made the same remark already in their early expeditions to the municipal centre Usila.
[65] *toj-lej.*

part of a Union of three enterprises of the CORENCHI communities. Project started out in Santa Cruz three years ago and Analco forms part of the Union since year 2016 with 26 hives shared by the 13 participants of the project[66]. In Analco discourses over money and personal gain are seemingly present and during my stay beekeepers were discussing the option of dividing the hives amongst the group of beekeepers in order to take care of the hives individually instead of working in a collective manner in the shared apiary[67].

Stuart Kirsch (2006, 190) argues with an example of compensation claims amongst Yonggom that changes in the use of indigenous spaces, money paid for conservation efforts in this case, remake the world for locals in the form of money. In the next subchapter, I will briefly examine the ideas of money brought by the conservation program. During the current neoliberal state politics of freeing markets and diminishing direct state control, entrance of the global capitalist system provides with new elements to the mixture of syncretic transformations. Conservation thus represents not only an abstract state's sphere but also the sphere of global economy for the communities.

4.3. Conservation, global economy sphere (/ "zone of high marginalization")

Stuart Kirsch (2006, 1) considers indigenous analysis as a way to negotiate and interact with the spheres of the nation state and global economy, many times intertwined in the current neoliberal world order. Here, I will briefly discuss which kind of challenges or merely new ingredients to the local syncretic mix, the conservation program, based more on "neoliberal economic models" as suggested by Paige West (2006, 184) has to offer. Community economies are not any more "local, specific and closed" as suggested by Aguirre Beltran (1979, 84), but instead connected in several ways, including conservation, to global economic processes. Money is experienced in conflicting ways and in my opinion, communities are living times of transition, not yet knowing how they feel about their participation in the global economy. This is demonstrated in *tlatepusqueños* contradictory feelings about the road to Usila, being under construction. Road is considered as a necessity, especially in the case of emergencies and access to

[66] The amount of hives is higher in Santa Cruz and el Barrio that participate in the Union for longer time. In 2016, the amount of hives in Santa Cruz was 200 divided in five apiaries. In el Barrio, there were three apiaries with 76 hives all together.

[67] See Merrifield (1959, 876-877) on ideas of individualism entering to Chinantec cultures through *mestizo* contact and how this has affected Chinantec vocabulary of possessive suffixes.

health care services. Then again, “bad ideas” of money and urban lifestyle are feared to enter to the community by the road. Stuart Kirsch (2006, 210) sees that entrance of money in the communities leave them in between two worlds, local life and the necessities pertaining to the global, economically run world. The doubt of the accountant of Geoconservación of, whether the communities realize well that they form part of communal enterprises aiming towards international organic markets is a legitimate question. “*They consider it as something communitarian, instead of an enterprise*,” I was told by the accountant on his visit to Analco.

Conservation entered to Chinantla at the same time with the recognizing and stabilizing state politics, described in the earlier chapter, but also in the course of the new environmentalist politics and the commercialization of these after the United Nations’ Rio Conference in 1992. At the same time, neoliberal state politics have accelerated in all the sectors of Mexican governments’ political agendas, culminating in the signing of the NAFTA free trade agreement with the United States and Canada in 1994. In the beginning of the 21st century, Mexico has been confronted with a wave of exacerbated neoliberal federal presidents; the former manager of Mexican Coca-Cola Company Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón from the same PAN-party (Márquez & Meyer 2000, 475-76, 498, 503). Privatizing politics have continued to be manifested through legislative reforms of the current president Enrique Peña Nieto.

Conservation changes the significances given to “an ethnoterritory” and addresses different, monetary measured values to the forest and water as in the example of scientific forestry of James Scott (1998, 11) and as suggested by Paige West (2006, 197). Social significances of the land, such as described earlier in this chapter, turn this way into monetary values (West 2006, 183). In Chinantla, these values are measured through the payments for ecosystem services by hectares and by carbon dioxide measuring as part of the program of the United Nation’s carbon dioxide reducing mechanism REDD+. Commercial tendencies are even too clearly manifested in Mexican environmental politics and communitarian conservation: “Trees give us a lot of products that we can see, touch, smell… Sell,” is advised in corresponding governmental institutions’ (SEMARNAT and CONAFOR) presentation directed to the communities receiving payments for ecosystem services. Presentation goes on: “Who could be interested in having clean water in the river valley? Populations, enterprises bottling water, hydroelectric enterprises, fishery enterprises,” and: “Who could be interested in the

diversity of forests? Pharmaceutic enterprises, laboratories that produce paints, oils and resin etc., enterprises of modified crops, touristic enterprises." (CONAFOR & SEMARNAT.)

But it is not for the conservation that ideas of money and monetary benefits of resources entered for the first to the communities. This had already happened in the 1970's with the introduction and governmental promotion of commercial coffee production. Recondo (2007, 64) sees coffee as a key to "imposed modernization" and Aguirre Beltran (1979, 89), similar to the idea of conservation as a sphere of global economy, sees cash crops as a means of control by global economy, widening the idea of the earlier chapter presenting modified crops as a means of imposed state control. Coffee production and the money gained through this have permitted infrastructural changes in the communities of Chinantla: to "improve" housing with "materials" for an example (meaning cement floor and sheet metal roofs instead of pure ground and *zacate)* (Orozco Ramírez 2011, 159; Sesia 2002, 34). Don Felipe, San Pedro Tlatepusco remembers the times of the National Coffee Institution: "*Just some time, no more, they were buying coffee. And they handled a lot of money. And, ya, after that the same government took this away. And I don't know, what problem they had… They bought tons of coffee! A-ha they came with airplanes also. They took costales, sacks, full of coffee!"* Other commercial crops of minor importance were tried out in the communities that dedicated themselves to sugarcane and livestock production (swine more than anything) and in the 1990's in Analco also to the production of vanilla. All of these attempts went down as, in major scale, did coffee as well, followed by the disappearance of the fish and crayfish of the river. The appearance of the plant disease *roya* in 2014 has deepened the unprofitableness of coffee production.

Communities of San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco are by official indicators considered as "zones of high marginalization". This was reminded to me many times by the community members, "as we are in the zone of high marginalization," and "there are a lot of necessities, *hay mucha necesidad*". By official means marginalization is defined in Mexico as "lack of opportunities and of access to goods and services" and as "lack of skills to obtain these"[68] (CONAPO). In my opinion, even more so it is about

[68] The official indicators of marginalization are housing, salary, education and density of population (CONAPO). More about the process of defining "marginalization" in the Chinantla region, see de Teresa 2011.

an attitude that marks both political discourses and self-imaginaries of people living in rural communities. This view of the communities, "rich in nature," as Ernesto had told me, is also present in institutions' and politicians' discourses and in academic and popular articles[69]. Conservation program and money entering through it also in their way promote this view. Orozco Ramírez (2011, 131) describes how governmental programs have promoted feelings of poverty amongst Chinantecs of Valle Nacional. I was many times commented that "the money for conservation" is "not a payment," as the concept of "payment for ecosystem services" implies, but instead "an aid", referring to the insufficiency of the money. Local technician Raúl from Analco reminds me of this insufficiency, but also figures governmental programs as a gateway or almost as a responsibility of the government to ease the necessities: "*For an example as we are marginalized as indigenous villages, we should have more right to obtain [monetary] resources. When more development. Be it forestry, be it, estee, in terms of tourism or how do I know. Now, ahorita, the contrary: they're taking away from us estee [monetary] aids by cents or from each program like from Sagarpa or CDI or from CONANP."* Definition as "a zone of high marginalization" is useful in search of these "governmental aids" that Raúl sees as the correct way to obtain development as the localities considered as "marginalized" have been determined as prior regions for governmental interventions (CONAPO).

Money divides opinions in the communities. This is especially visible in San Pedro. Money is thought to enter with "other bad ideas" and "bad people". Elder people think that entrance of monetary resources in the communities make (younger) people lazy to "work the land" and to "want the lifestyle of Usila". In San Pedro, where the consumption of beans is high, I was commented that already most often instead of cultivating them in *milpas*, beans are bought from a shop in Usila. In both of the communities, I was told that for the conservation zone's sowing restrictions certain species have fallen into extinction, like the big, white *mayeso* beans. I was explained that for the changes occurring in the climate, sowing conditions have changed so that people do not know when to cultivate, or that insects are ending their legumes. Still, I was further commented (especially by people who still cultivate their own beans without any problem) that the money entering for the conservation would have made people too lazy to cultivate beans, which require a

[69] See Berget & al. 2015, 250; CONANP 2005, 10; Orozco Ramírez 2011, 128. Popular news medias'articles on education and marginalization in CORENCHI communities, see Nvinoticias 2015.

lot of cleaning. “Beans and *jitomate, sí da,* they are giving well,” I was assured by these people. In the Chinantec community Santa Cecilia de Madero, the knowledge of cultivating corn and beans were similarly reported as forgotten during the years of intensive coffee production and governmental aid. In Santa Cecilia, community members ended up buying these basic crops. This, of course, resulted as difficulties, when the prices of coffee dropped suddenly and government retrieved all the earlier support for the activity. (Sesia 2002, 35,37.)

Paige West (2006, 8) notes in her own study about the influences of a conservation zone in Papua New Guinea that people are tend to imagine that through the program they could access things that they see as development. In San Pedro and Analco, these things can be communal investments as in Analco: construction of the health care centre (2013) and the road to Usila (2009). Or they can be individual: a roof of sheet metal or a set of huge stereos, found from many houses with family members working in and sending money from the United States. Despite the comments indicating desires for “more development” and monetary resources and the notions such as “high marginalization”, it seems that the fulfilment of material needs is clearly not the most important for these Chinantlan communities. This is visible in the reluctance of the proposal for a new hydroelectric dam in the region. This project promised a lot of material benefits for the communities. Reluctance towards the dam and material gains of it together with the presentation of conservation as filling what was already prescribed by local cosmovisions speak of a special appreciation towards nature and territory and against an idea of conservation as purely a means of control imposed from above. This also speaks against solely exploitive explanations for the communities’ will to participate in the conservation program.

“*It’s too bad you didn’t get to know them. Always when someone from outside came, they were the ones to talk with them*,” I was finally told by community members in San Pedro. Besides the recently disappeared old man, many of the elderly community members, eager towards conservation, had a while ago passed away. “*They were the ones who spoke for the conservation, they wanted development and the road, because by themselves they had diabetes, and it was hard to transit to Usila*,” I was told. I will now in the next chapter, move on to discuss autonomy construed as part of the conservation program and current day’s environmentalist aspirations especially in Mexico, but taking place worldwide. I will discuss the new types of power relations that this creates, and

question whether autonomy and “development”, as aspired by the already passed people involved with conservation, can be construed through this kind of a net of relations.

5. DEATH TO THE STATE

"*Fathers teach their sons how to sow and harvest milpa, the corn. I learned from my father since a child how to sow and harvest marijuana*," we are sitting under Pancho's *mamey* and *tepejilote* trees, close to the airstrip. "*At that time, everyone was used to sow marijuana. Narcos, a couple of gringos from Michoacán, brought the cultivate of marijuana, they built their house up to the mountain, next to the airstrip. Under the sacks of coffee beans, marijuana was taken out from the community*." The hut, *bodega*, was construed next to the airstrip during the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari in the 1990's[70]. At the time, an airplane passed from three to four times a week to take out coffee from the community. Men working in their fields would know that it was five p.m. because of the punctually passing airplane. It was time to head back home if they wanted to arrive to the community before the darkness. "*I liked the cultivation of marijuana*," Pancho says. "*But the village already said no, they decided not to dedicate us to that anymore*." During my stay, I heard several explanations, why the community decided to drive out *narcos* or *gringos* and to leave the cultivation of *marijuana.* I was told that the Mexican army, *ejercito,* intervened to clean the village. I was also told that the community decided this independently since the older *comuneros* were worryingly noticing that several younger men had started to smoke *marijuana.*

*Picture 6. "*Community surrounded by the mountains". View to San Pedro from the abandoned airstrip.

[70] Salinas de Gortari was president in the late 1980's and early 1990's, from 1988 till 1994.

The old men, who wanted development, especially nature conservation and the road to Usila, are already almost gone from San Pedro, including the father of Pancho, who was lost in the mountain just before my arrival to the community. In this chapter, I will delve deeper into the dilemmas about relations of dependency and autonomy into which the search for development has taken the communities. My specific research question for the chapter is how indigenous autonomy can be construed and practiced through the nature conservation program. I will examine the new dependencies of environmentalists and NGO's that the global green politics have brought. I will turn to analytically view these dependencies as promoting indigenous autonomy and self-determination by serving as gate-ways to obtain development, when development is seen as "goods and services" (CONAPO; see also Nygren 2003, 41).

When planning my study, I did not think of including the relations between indigenous communities and environmental actors, such as local environmental NGO's. Still, for the strong presence that non-governmental organizations have in my field context, the communities of CORENCHI, I quite soon after the beginning of my fieldwork realized that I could not leave this aside from the research. Many of my informants spoke of the advantages and difficulties that they have had during the years of working with NGO's. In San Pedro, opinions of whether to continue to co-operate with "the technical adviser", Geoconservación, are divided and critical. I understand my position as complicated to present critique towards the work of the local NGO, since through their introduction I gained my access to the field in the first place. Berglund and Anderson (2003, 6-7) reinforce that it is not an easy job for anthropologists to criticize environmentalist aims that usually have well-meaning objectives. In my reflection, my aim is to be fair towards everyone, in some extent undermining my own personal opinions and by paying attention and respect to those of the community members, present in my field data. In this chapter, my point of departure has been to seek to understand, what CORENCHI and participation in CORENCHI mean to the community members themselves, similar manner as in the previous chapter when I examined conservation as located in the local cosmovision.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I examined autonomy from the point of view of the relation between indigenous communities and the state. Presence of the environmental organization Geoconservación is relevant in the sense that the organization acts as a link or a mediator between the communities and state institutions. Anthropologist James

Ferguson (2005, 337) has criticized Scott's argument of state control imposed through rough state simplifications. He argues that this relation is more complex and in our current era intervened by other actors, such as non-governmental organizations, as well (ibid., 377-381).

New environmentalist movements of the past decades, starting from the concern evoked by the Rio conference, do not only create new dependencies, but also new arenas and possibilities for indigenous peoples to take advantage of current political tendencies and relations that they make with these environmental actors. In anthropology, study of environmental movements and environmentalism became central since the 1990's, but the relations between local communities and their natural realms have been studied already since long before that, from the earliest scholarly decades[71]. Currently new co-operations between environmentalists and indigenous peoples have been studied by many scholars from different fields of study[72]. I will move on to examine the new threats and possibilities that the era of highlighted environmental concern and action presents for indigenous communities. Adaptation to these values were already discussed in the previous chapter concerning cosmovision and I will continue here the discussion in a more concrete level of global environmental politics.

5.1. Environmentalism and control

When we arrived to Santa Cruz for the first time, I had spent the night on the bouncing serpentine roads from Oaxaca de Juárez to Tuxtepec, curling through the mountain. I was in the car with two biologists, the manager of the environmental NGO Geoconservación and one of his employees. I had fallen asleep in the car, listening to the conversation, not directed against me, but threating the usefulness of social sciences. In every curve, the lights of the jeep coloured a slice of the mountain and the head of the sleeping manager hit the window. Silvio Rodriquéz' song lyrics shared the word of rural romanticism from a tape. We arrived to the upper most CORENCHI community, Santa Cruz, in the early morning that was fresh of the humid dew and, *apenas*, clearing clouds surrounding us. We headed directly to the meeting room in order to assist in one of

[71] Already such early scholars as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) and Émile Durkheim (1995 [1912]) considered the relation between nature and culture or society.
[72] Some more anthropological contributions have been mentioned here. See for an example Conklin & Graham 1995; Kirsch 2006; West 2006.

CORENCHI's general assemblies. "Welcome to the territories of GeoCORENCHI," I was greeted by a man, community member from Santa Cruz, who was standing in front of the building, waiting for the meeting to begin. In her book Paige West (2006, 230) jokes about making a conservation biologist "the main character" of her study. This will apply in the next subchapters of my study that describes the complicated and conflictive presence of conservation biologists in Chinantla.

Territory of GeoCORENCHI

Geoconservación is an environmental NGO with a changing quantity of staff of around 10 persons. "Geo" was founded in 2003 in order to act as a technical adviser for the starting conservation efforts of the Chinantec communities. Manager of the organization, one of the founders, is the only member of the personnel that has not changed since then. The office of the organization is located in the outskirts of the city of Oaxaca de Juárez. From there the cars to Santa Cruz Tepetotutla, having no other public transportation of open access leave to the mountain. In this subchapter of my thesis I will analyse the role of Geo, the environmental civil organization, acting in the zone.

Don Felipe was serving the cargo of common goods officer, when the conservation program first entered to his community. Community of San Pedro had heard about the program from its upper neighbours in Santa Cruz and el Barrio: "*It was in 2004. When they started, bueno, as they are common goods officers from the other communities, sí, like Santa Cruz, San Antonio del Barrio and Santiago Tlatepusco. They were them, who were the first ones, who entered the program. Program of… Of conservation of the United Nations. That's how the program is called, because it was not known at all that there is the program, no… Haa. Then one of, one of them, o sea: my señora has a cousin, he is called Alex, he is from Barrio, I don't know if you know Alex? He said: 'I see that you have your forest as well, if you'd like to enter to the program of conservation of the United Nations,' he said. There is a program, where the government, dice, they give you an aid, for all that you're conserving. 'Así? Really?' I say to him. There was an office in Tuxtepec. It was in Callejón 12 de Octubre, that's how the street in Tuxtepec is called. I tell them: 'I come, I want to know, if there is a program of conservation of various countries.' Considering all the global warming, no. They had already met and all the countries that had voice said: 'more needs to be conserved'… An agreement of them,*

pues. But they say [in the office] that there needs to be a call, I think, it's until 2004. I went asking in 2002. I went back in 2004, but it was not yet a call in 2004. And, así! … When I was in Tuxtepec, the biologist came here from Santa Cruz. They went to Barrio and they came here to San Pedro and I was there!... Looking for the program." Even the officer had already for couple of years visited the office in Callejón 12 de Octubre in Tuxtepec, asking about the program and he had already "informed the village" of it, still, Don Felipe remembers that it was difficult to try to persuade the community in favour of the program: "*Some compañeros, sí, they were for the program. And others, they did not like it… But, sí, they accepted, accepted the program."*

San Pedro is still teared by the same doubts about their participation in the program and for being divided by conservation. Unpredictably, even now more positive towards conservation, it was Analco that was harder to convince by the environmentalists to join the other communities of the region to their conservation efforts: "*Eso noonoo, believe me, it was not easy at all. It took time, meetings… Like two years, ya este, meetings. Clearly a certain biologist, I think you know the biologist… with an engineer, he came here to Analco. And now, estee, the biologist came to chat with us, the members of the common goods organism… And that is when we as members of the common goods office called the assembly so that it'll be formal, sea. A biologist wants to enter to work, what is environment that we are earlier ignoring… And bueno, there were doubts, it was not accepted, pues. The assembly neglected it totally that noo, no one outsider would enter to, pues, to its territory. Because, según, our people understood earlier that they were persons, who were going to invade land or take something that is ours. X thing. Also, for the question, ahora sí, of conflicts that were with the villages from here, Santa Cruz, Barrio… Of course, here: Santiago, Usila. We've had, well, big conflicts. But, ya, coming from that, ya, we see the people: how could we unite with these people, with Barrio, with Santiago, if those are the persons that have attacked on us? Like nooo, pues. Ya, it took time for the biologist to come back, it took like two, three months, the biologist himself came back. Now he already went to see in a particular manner the officer at his home. What the officer did was to say to the biologist that he'd need to handle it. That the village already decided that no, pues. And the biologist insisted, pues, to gather again the assembly with all the comuneros, ya. And that's when we did not accept neither. Already two times no and the biologist, very sadly, he went. We had a tough discussion in between us… We, este, ya, our people said: 'we are not gonna let in any organization, A.C.,*

because they are the ones that take advantage of us, they ask for a copy of your id and all that. All what a project needs and then another village takes the advantage. Better not to accept any'… And my suegro, father-in-law, went to Oaxaca to chat in a conference and… He came back to the assembly with the message that Santa Cruz, el Barrio, Santiago and San Pedro are going to receive a money, pues. A cheque of I-don't-know-how-many millions for conserving environment. But that's how it went back then… We called a meeting and that's when we invited the biologist. Now he did not come anymore for his own will. We invited him. To an assembly... And that's when we accepted," Gustavo tells me. From here, I will now move on to reflect on the further doubts, after the initial phases of the organization, towards the co-operation with "the biologist" and other environmental actors in the region.

Environmental anthropologists have recognized the need to study environmental organizations and their aspirations. Berglund and Anderson (2003, 14) suggest that we should analyse their operating spaces, boardrooms and NGOs' offices, more so when their actions end up legitimating unfair power structures of our current world order. Other anthropologists have addressed this as well: James Ferguson (2005) with his critique towards Scott by expanding his ideas of control to private and NGO sector actors, Peter Brosius (1999) critizicing global ecological processes and Stuart Kirsch and Paige West, whose studies in Papua New Guinea have already been discussed in the earlier chapters of this study. As it has been widely discussed in current anthropological literature, it was not my main purpose to study environmentalists themselves. The relation between organizations and communities was still something very predominant in my field and rose up continuously in the informal conversations and tape-recorded interviews with the community members and with Geoconservación staff and others, mainly biologists, working in the region or other regions of Oaxaca.

Here I will discuss the problematics of co-operation between indigenous groups and environmentalists, as it appeared in my field context and, in the following subchapters continue by contradicting this with the possible advantages recognized in this sort of co-operation. I will analyse the theme in relation to the state control imposed to the communities, challenging their relative autonomy and at the same time allowing the construction of "relational autonomy" (Ulloa 2011). Here a slight comparison between the two communities is again relevant in order to understand their divergent motivations and participations in the conservation program. Co-operation with environmental actors

divides opinions strongly in the community of San Pedro, where a conflict between two environmental NGOs took place a couple of years earlier to my research. In the community of Analco, these co-operations are more so recognized as beneficial for the community's own interests or even generally and individually enriching. "*I have learned a lot from the biologists*," local technician Raúl tells me in Analco. He is presenting different species to me in Chinantec and in Spanish on one of our walks through the communal landscape. The opinions towards co-operation with environmental NGO's are thus as contradictory and heterogeneous as towards participation in the conservation program. Here I will be able to present only some tendencies that appeared as predominant during my fieldwork.

Differences between local and conservation visions to the nature have been discussed already in the earlier chapters of this thesis. Anja Nygren (2003, 39), studying environmental protection in Nicaragua, notes that environmental NGO's many times adapt the role to plan for the rural peoples, but from a very different context as the personnel of these organizations are usually urban and educated people from the cities. Differences in local and conservation understandings are visible in spatial organization as in mapping and scientific and commercial values given to nature. Berglund and Anderson (2003, 8) define that these differences are originating from different ways of perceiving nature as inner or as in the case of the environmentalists: as outer. Similar manner, Paige West (2006, 9) explains environmentalism as western based assumptions about the separation of nature and culture. These differences in understanding nature and acting according to that can lead sometimes to disregard indigenous manners of environmental management and rights to sustainable use of their territory and natural resources (Nygren 2003, 42).

In the case of CORENCHI, this difference of worldviews, ideals and concrete manners has been present in the ways of perceiving territorial or conservation space as in the case of mapping and delimiting areas for conservation and cultivation. It has also been present in some differences between the local environmental knowledge and terminology when compared with the scientific ones. Berglund and Anderson (2003, 5) see these differences in conservation and local ways of understanding and ordering space as a form of discrimination towards indigenous communities. In Chinantla, this "environmentalism and discrimination" come together can be connected to state operations keeping control over its diverse populations as discussed in the first analytical chapter of this thesis about

state control and implementation of indigenist politics through governmental programs. Discrimination can also be seen in the ideas of "necessity" and "marginalization" that the governmental aid programs create, as discussed in the previous chapter of local understandings on nature. Environmental anthropologists Berglund, Anderson and Brosius refer to environmentalist efforts, like biodiversity conservation, as powerful political agendas and tools that in the contexts of economic polarization affect marginal populations by distributing privilege in inequitable ways (Berglund & Anderson 2003, 4, 15; Brosius 1999, 36). Still, as I argue, in the studied communities in some other profound aspects, the dedication to nature conservation corresponds local understandings of territorial regulation and control prevalent already in the myths and the cosmovision, but also in the practicalities of the accustomated local power structures rising from the mystified past and belief system. This tension between outer control or discrimination and local control is significant when analysing communities' relation with the technical adviser Geoconservación as well.

The idea of Geoconservación as a mediator between the communities and the state is firmly based on the organization's earlier, and current, links to state institutions. It is also one requisite of the program for ecosystem services to recruit a technical adviser. Beth A. Conklin and Laura R. Graham (1995, 698) have written that in Latin American efforts, it is common that there is a non-indigenous, *mestizo,* mediator between indigenous communities and the nation state. Anthropologist Michael Dove (1998, 17) has claimed that conservation would have even become a new, big enemy to some of the world's rural populations. Dove goes on by describing environmental organizations behind conservation efforts as "the new colonizers" of our era (ibid., 26). I think, and my ethnographic findings suggest so, that important in these kind of claims is to see how the proper populations understand the co-operation with environmental actors and their own autonomy in relation to that. In Analco, father of Valentina was once saying to me furiously "*We are autonomous, we are not 'a decreed land', tierra decretada, that's the most important*." With *tierra decretada* in this context it is referred to imposed governance over the use of forests and natural resources. The zone formed by the four CORENCHI communities is considered as "voluntarily conserved" and the local inhabitants are referred as masters, *dueños*[73], of the forest. These communities, especially

[73] In my opinion, use of the term *dueño,* "master", in this context comes from outside official uses and does not have any intended or unintended reference to the spirits of the forest called *Dueños* in

self-conscious Analco, emphasize these characteristics and "the conditions" that the communities have put to their participation, making them more autonomous in relation to the program and to the institutional and environmental actors present now in their territory.

Territorial confrontations

Going back in time and location: "*I have bad news: I found a pre-Hispanic grave and I took up the rocks and they're already at my home. I don't know if it is a severe crime and hope that you'd help me*," in the community of el Barrio, at the time officer of common goods tells me about the foundation of a communitarian museum. After finding some pre-Hispanic idols in his *milpa*, he had called to the manager of the organization CAMPO A.C. that used to work with the communities of CORENCHI before 2004, when Geoconservación entered to the region. CAMPO retrieved from the zone soon after the entrance of the conservation program[74]. In San Pedro, I was explained that CAMPO gave them mostly material benefits, not money, and that is why the communities preferred to continue solely with the programs provided by Geoconservación. In San Pedro, the beehives that couple of community members were taking care of during my stay and the communal cottage are both remnants of the earlier projects with CAMPO A.C.

"*They left for their own inner problems*," I was told in the communities of CORENCHI. Or: "*They did not like the model of organization as CORENCHI*". It was time for Xóchitl to leave from San Pedro. I accompanied her in order to be able to stop by in the neighbour village of San Pedro: Santiago Tlatepusco. Santiago, together with the community of Nopalera del Rosario, decided to leave the organization two years earlier to my research. I had heard reasons for their resignation from different persons and had also been hearing about Santiago "molesting the radio connection" between CORENCHI communities and the advancing of the road construction between Usila and San Pedro. So, it seemed to me necessary and fair to try and hear the explanation of the proper community members in Santiago.

Chinantla. Similarity in the used terminology is here thus random and the connotation and the contexts of use are different in the two cases.

[74] About the work of CAMPO A.C. in the region, see CAMPO 2005; CAMPO, 88-95. In some of the communities, mostly in el Barrio, individual community members continue to cooperate with CAMPO still today.

"*The so called technical adviser did not act as an adviser should. The so called adviser, so called biologist, was trying to govern the village. People from outside came and they did not leave anything for the village, they just came for their own benefit*," the officer of common goods told me with a strict voice. He was holding his sacks of load, just arriving from Usila. I had been sitting in a bench in front of his office and waiting for him to arrive. That was the only thing he agreed on saying in terms of my study, but still adding: "*We continue to conserve our forest without the organization*." After the intervention of environmental organizations, community of Santiago had decided not to let anyone to conduct a study or a project in their territory anymore[75], similar to San Pedro's doubts and the decision to not let so many studies to be carried out in their community.

"*Another organization from Veracruz was about to work for the benefit of conservation, but they entered to tell the people that it's bad to participate in the programs of government. It's so unjust to come and tell people that*," the manager of the organization Geoconservación tells me. He has taken his glasses off and is rubbing his tired eyes. It is five a.m. and we are sitting in the paving of the long main road, crossing the whole Usila: all the small shops, a park and the basketball field. We have left together from Analco after CORENCHI's general assembly and are waiting for "Lobo", the bus to Tuxtepec, to arrive. It is dark and quiet. The only sound other than our voices is the beating of a dough from the bakery shop.

"*After the conservation, a lot of people from outside came. Saying that they also want to work with us. But not all of them came with the same idea. Some of them came with a negative idea. That the government would only be doing commerce without people knowing it, pues… That the government of today would be taking away all the land. Maybe to kick us out of here, because this land, ya, the government was buying it with the aid that they're giving. Making an exchange, pues. That's what they came saying... Santiago; they already became angry and threw out all the organizations,"* Don Felipe in San Pedro Tlatepusco explains the conflict that evolved in the communities, more so in Santiago and San Pedro, between the two environmental organizations. An academic quarrel around the issue was construed by anti- and pro[76]- conservation publications by

[75] A right to use the declaration of the common goods officer of Santiago Tlatepusco in terms of this study was permitted by the officer.
[76] See for an example Ibarra et al. 2011; Bray & al. 2012.

the two opposite sides. In San Pedro people were divided to back up these two organizations. "*As there were two advisers. Then one said this and another one said that. Better ya..."* Maurilio, the vice common goods officer from San Pedro explains and continues: "*The other one is called GDF [Global Diversity Foundation]. We learned a lot from them. They gave us a lot of information."* Similarly, Pancho and other community members supporting the other organization, Global Diversity Foundation, tell me that their information was "good information".

But "*why to serve two señores?"* Mariano in San Pedro asks me. Contradictions are still visible in people's postures and Don Felipe explains how the community decided to stay for the moment in the conservation program even torn by the conflict between two environmental organizations: "*We were only six persons backing the program, nothing more six persons wanted to stay with the program. All the people said: 'Nombre, that biologist comes cheating on people!' With the officer that we have now, he was for the program. O sea, he helped us a lot to continue in the program. The government was saying nothing bad. Neither the program was saying nothing bad."*

After communities started to work as CORENCHI and with Geoconservación, other actors have gotten scarce. The conflict between the two environmental organizations did not evolve in Analco, but during the time that the community served presidency of CORENCHI in 2014-15, communities invited another biologist with monetary resources to work independently with them. This stressed the relation with the technical adviser, Geoconservación, especially with "the biologist", the manager of the civil organization. "*To be honest the biologist got a bit molested with us. Because we looked for another, ahora sí, biologist, as if to do a project, no. Sí, entered a biologist from Tuxtepec. Because for us Tuxtepec is closer. And, gracias a Díos, his projects were approved,"* Gustavo explains. The control that the NGO has over accepting who enters to work with the communities is present in the previous conflicts with other organizations entering to work in the zone, but also in my own entrance to do fieldwork in the region, as discussed in the chapter on methodology.

Power of individual, outside actors at local communities (when not considering anthropologists themselves) has not been much scholarly discussed. In Chinantla, the organization Geoconservación is strongly identified with its manager. With a quick impression, it seems that "his presence marks the whole territory" of CORENCHI (as told by a visiting biologist). This presence is differently experienced by different persons and

more appreciated by active CORENCHI supporters. In the communities, the manager of the environmental organization is commonly referred as "the biologist" or "the Jaguar". As noted earlier there exists no signs of pre-conservation idealization of jaguar. In the conservation discourse jaguar still seems to be mystified. Pictures, taken by hidden cameras, of the great feline are shown to visitors. Still, people have a contradicting and complex relation with the animal. Jaguar is felt as dangerous, moving all the time closer to the habitat and, also, "a bit evil". The same applies to peoples' feelings about "the Jaguar", talking now about conservation biologists. We were once in San Pedro, returning with Ana from *milpa* while she explained her misthrust towards biologists: "*We are in a community, here we cohabit, at least you say hello to people*". Anthropologist Andrew Lattas (2011, 99) presents a case of a white man gone native and adopted as a leader following the logic of the local big men and sorcery systems in Papua New Guinea region. Similarly, the presence of "the biologist" or "the Jaguar" has taken place in the local personified logic of territorial control by *Dueños, naguales* and *chaneques* in a transformed way to respond current day's environmentalist aspirations as a means towards territorial care, regulation and even sanctification.

The organization Geoconservación in its discourse towards the communities in such occasions as CORENCHI's general assemblies and the third *feria* of biodiversity and Chinantac cultures, creates an assumption of the mediation of Geo as indispensable in order to enjoy the monetary benefits from governmental institutions. I asked Gustavo in the community of Analco about the challenges that he sees that CORENCHI is currently having. "*Eeeee, look: the truth is that one of the challenges that we could speak with people in two, three meetings is that CORENCHI would not only be… Not to depend on someone. That CORENCHI could look for its own professionals. Its own people, its biologists, engineers, its administrative staff, everything. Everything that is the ground, ahora sí, CORENCHI to become like, like Geo, let's say. As far as I could see that is the challenge of CORENCHI already for 10 years. That CORENCHI would not depend in all on someone, on Geo, on other persons. Why not to say this: pues, CORENCHI, we can already be alone, pues, we look for people and projects. Nooo, nothing more that Geo, but other biologists apart from Geo, that CORENCHI would have its own personnel, its own ahora sí, office… This is one of the challenges that we, ahora sí, are thinking of."* Gustavo sees that it would be time to move on from the 10 years lasted dependency on environmental actors and technical advisers. However, in the next subchapters I will

reflect further on the thought of dependency and relations towards wellbeing and autonomy.

5.2. Dependency and autonomy

I will discuss different angles from which dependency and dependency-mindedness can be understood. This discussion has already been opened with the earlier chapter's thoughts about conservation's place in the local cosmovision. Now I will concentrate on more material and political factors to reflect on in which amount making relations with different actors and with environmental actors operating in between state and the communities can be beneficial for the proper communities.

Shifting middle ground and mutual benefit

"*The fight has been through our organization, CORENCHI*." Organization as a collective and in co-operation with Geoconservación has permitted the communities to neglect the entrance of the unwelcomed transnational hydroelectric company and has brought several promises of upcoming material benefits such as of the phone and internet network connection towers and communitarian production of energy hopefully taking place in Santa Cruz and el Barrio. "*It's the 16 % that the community pays [for the technical adviser]. It depends of whether the project is approved, pues. As long as it's not approved, there is nothing. Geo, este, depends of the communities. If there are no communities, if they don't work with us anymore, what could they do? As they're depending a lot of each community!"* CORENCHI delegates in San Pedro Tlatepusco think over the relation between the communities and Geo. Benefits of the co-operation beyond the mentioned 16 % can be mutual and conform "a shifting middle ground", a space for "intercultural communication, exchange and joint political action" (Conklin 1998, 696).

Conklin and Graham explain "shifting middle ground" as a construction of "a mutually comprehensive world characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange", different from simple relations of domination, subordination and acculturation. It is a space, where indigenous peoples and NGO's can join against megaprojects, as in the case of the hydroelectric dam that the Spanish company wants to construct in Chinantla. As

through environmental anthropology, also through the co-operation with environmentalists and NGO's, local conflicts can be brought into knowledge of wider, even international, audiences. Conservation becomes again religion-like in its inclusion of local communities into the global community of nations, bigger organizations and enterprises: here environmentalism offers the communities a way to communicate and legitimate their claims to land, resources and rights. (Conklin 1998, 695-699).

Colombian anthropologist Astrid Ulloa (1999, 81, 92) sees that the demands of the green consumers of today's economic order permit the construction of indigenous autonomy and peaceful ways of resistance. Stuart Kirsch (2006, 303-305) figures that the alliances made with environmental actors and the essentialized representations of indigenous peoples used in these international arenas can even make "a counterglobalization" from below possible. In Chinantla, co-operation with the environmental NGO has permitted the communities to oppose transnational forces and to not depend in their infrastructure on the bribes given by local municipal politicians. Perceptions of need and marginalization, discussed in the earlier chapter, have led the communities to construct a net of relations, from local as their own organization CORENCHI to regional and, through the organization Geoconservación, global as well. I will now present how the communities of Analco and San Pedro have in their own different ways navigated through this net of actors and how this has contributed to their local autonomy and motivations towards biodiversity conservation in co-operation with their technical adviser Geoconservación.

"*I would like to especially address my words to the youngsters from San Pedro*," "the biologist" said in a general assembly of CORENCHI for which we had gathered in Analco. He is talking about the importance of not giving up on the conservation program. This is the previous day before we found ourselves sitting down on the pavement of the sleepy main road in Usila, waiting for the bus to take us to Tuxtepec. I will look, again, into the differing motivations of Analco and San Pedro towards communitarian conservation.

"*In the night, we sit in front of the table of Mariana drinking coffee. 'Bueno, bueno,' someone says in the loudspeaker; there is to be an announcement. Mariana tells me that the community members of Analco are reminded by their authorities that it's prohibited to burn trashes outside milpas."* (Fieldnotes, the 2nd of March 2016).

Analco and San Pedro are distinct in their attitudes towards governmental programs. Whereas Analco is more eager towards conservation, co-operation with biologists and commercial honey production, *tlatepusqueños* are divided over by these themes. When people in Analco wonder, why there is no market place in Usila to sell their products, in San Pedro some people think that the road that would permit them to transport their products, could enter with "bad ideas". When Mexico 17 years ago decided to nationalize the system of daylight-saving time, Analco went for "the hour of the government" or "the hour of Peña Nieto", Mexico's current president, whereas San Pedro continues to follow "the hour of God". Differences are also present in ways that "the money for conservation" is divided and used in the communities. In Analco the money is more probably used for common projects and in San Pedro, more likely, for individual benefits.

Me, in San Pedro*: "And what are the most urgent necessities?"*

Vice officer of common goods Maurilio*: "The road connection!"*

Lucio*: "Pues, equally the road…"*

Vice officer*: "And to have a permanent doctor in here… And equally there are no medicine in here."*

Sesia (2002, 32) notes in a study made about coffee production in the Chinantlan communities of Analco and Santa Cecilia that, again, same differences between these two communities occur. Analco counts with various services, such as at the moment the health care service and a drivable road that the community has attained for its own persistence. These services have been obtained by using "the money for conservation" to support the travelling expenses of communitarian authorities. These trips have sometimes resulted as monetary benefits obtained from different governmental dependencies and programs or from individual politicians, and sometimes as metallic containers for corn, just occupying space in *bodega* as during my second visit to Analco. The offices of common goods and the agent stay open the whole day and until late night, when there is a deadline of a project:

"*Valentina's father tells me that it is the task of the common goods officer and of the agent to look for funds. It's already half past eleven in the night, when I descent the staircase of 77 steps from cancha to bodega. Light shines still bright up from the windows of the*

common goods office. The ones with cargo of the office are still organizing some paper work that started already two days ago. Atmosphere up in the office was convivial, music from bachata to corridos and tropical music is played from mobile phones and exchanged through Bluetooth connection. Coca-Cola and aguardiente are shared to plastic cups and someone is drawing a caricature. Only couple of persons are working with the computer of the office and the others just seem to be keeping company. 'Mat-chup[3], vamonos, let's go,' Lupita says finally. She looks tired." (Fieldnotes, the 1st of March 2016).

In San Pedro, Don Agustin and Don Felipe comment that people have wanted to use money "to make their housing better": "*People start to construct already, pues, ahora sí, there has been a change, already not so good… But you see already how people are living,"* Don Agustin explains. The comparison between Analco and San Pedro made me, against all my defaults, to see Analco in some aspects as more self-standing than San Pedro even the second one is seemingly more critical towards governmental programs. Still, this is not as simple: it must be noted that during the recent decades the community of San Pedro has (even criticizing) participated in several endeavours that have led to inner divisions (such as religion and conservation) and to co-operation with outside actors that do not seem to correspond them well or some part of the population (such as cultivation of *marijuana* or, why not here as well: conservation). In the end, the main difference between Analco and San Pedro seems to be that the first one participates in a program that it critically evaluated first, that corresponds community's current endeavours and that the community members understand positively. On the other hand, the community of San Pedro participates in a program, the same one, but that does not correspond the values of some of the community members and that is considered negatively by part of them. This slight comparison leads me now to reflect on "autonomy" and self-determination as constructed in relations and in dependency.

Autonomy in relations

Here I will turn to discuss two themes: autonomy in relations and in co-operation and, maybe more radically, autonomy through dependence. The ideal of autonomy, also one that I used to reaffirm, has been to understand it as the social organization taking place outside the official state power or sphere (Graeber 2002). In Mexico, the Zapatist movement has been widely considered as an example and an ideal of indigenous

autonomous organization (Díaz-Polanco 2009, 59). In a contrary way, anthropologist Marcel Mauss sought for, as he called it, "an imaginary counterpower" as alternative organizations of people inside the frames of the formal state and economic spheres (Graeber 2004, 25). I will go further from the ideas of Mauss and reflect on how autonomy as a political ideal or lived reality can be achieved in contexts of dependence and relations, so called "relational autonomy" (Ulloa, 2011).

The achievement of social services and road connections through participation in a nature conservation program, as in the case of San Antonio Analco, and the comparison with seemingly more rebellious and thus "autonomous", but actually at the same time more doubtful San Pedro are the ethnographic findings that have led me to this discussion. In Analco, I was convinced that the community participates in the conservation program for its proper voluntariness, after a long consideration and within the frame of conditions put by the proper communities. "*In terms of the conservation zone that we have, it takes place from our uso y costumbre to our tradition. And obviously our maternal tongue as well. All of this should be respected,"* local technician Raúl tells me about these conditions. Here I will present arguments from Latin American anthropologists Astrid Ulloa (2011) and Héctor Díaz-Polanco (2009), who figure autonomy as taking place in relations and in different forms of co-operation. In the discussion about autonomy and dependence I will take up also ideas of such anthropologists as James Ferguson (2015) and China Scherz (2014), who both have studied the theme of dependence in the African development context. I will first discuss autonomy in relations.

Colombian anthropologist Astrid Ulloa defines autonomy as a process taking place at local, national and international levels. Autonomy as a dynamic process is transformed by local and global forces, as was discussed in the case of ethnoterritoriality and syncretism in the previous chapter. Ethnoterritoriality, a concept of Alicia Barabas, should not be seen as separate from autonomy, but both as part of the same phenomena of changes in territorial management and regulation brought by different processes, including adaption to international markets and to environmental discourses. For Ulloa "relational autonomy" is created in the interaction of different actors and expressed in the formation of grassroots organizations, national meetings and international alliances. Relational autonomy and self-determination are based on voluntarily formed decisions and ties of co-operation, including co-operation with state actors. This way self-determination rises from relationships, negotiations and participation. (Ulloa 2011.)

Similarly, Mexican anthropologist Héctor Díaz-Polanco, reflecting on the Zapatist context, confirms that autonomy should not be confounded with the notion of independency or with a withdrawal from the surrounding society. Díaz-Polanco also emphasizes co-operation with state institutions in order to gain strategic access to national funds and to promote indigenous political agendas at different levels as in the idea of shifting middle ground of mutual co-operation. (Díaz-Polanco 2009, 28, 42, 49, 71, 76.) Ulloa (2011, 81, 89) describes that in relations indigenous peoples become powerful actors at local, national and transnational ecopolitical arenas and also Stuart Kirsch (2006, 314), focused on indigenous environmental movements, identifies the need to collaborate with transnational actors in order to these movements to succeed.

So, which would be more autonomous then: life without a system or life as part of a system? Schertz and Ferguson have both studied questions of development and dependence in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. Scherz (2014, 66) addresses that in contemporary understandings of development, self-sufficiency and community ownership are considered as ideals. James Ferguson (2015, 143) goes on by claiming that we are used to associate autonomy with freedom and thus dignity and people pursuing openly subordinate and dependent statuses, "declarations of dependence" as something contrary to these ideals present in Scott's contraposition of state and local communities.

"Declarations of dependence" might be a strong expression to talk about the Chinantlan communities of CORENCHI, who still openly express their autonomy, "*we're autonomous*", as Valentina's father in Analco told me, and identify themselves as a state like entity and as "*dueños* of the forests", equal partners in the context of different co-operations with state institutions. Still, some of the CORENCHI communities, especially Analco with a strong communal identity, have openly positive and eager attitudes towards participation in governmental programs and have gained goods and services through co-operation with these different actors. Ferguson (2015, 143) continues that in the ongoing discussions on development we tend to assume that development and progress eliminate dependence. Both Scherz (2014, 2) and Ferguson (2015, 143) point out that the values of independence and self-reliance are actually western ones with their origins in the enlightenment thinking of the times and ideals of Thomas Hobbes. In the context of the Ngoni, where James Ferguson (2015, 161) has conducted his ethnographic fieldwork, the concept of citizenship does not correspond the ideas of equality and rights, but instead clientilistic and parental authority is sought for. Scherz (2014, 44) adds that in these cases

attempts to avoid dependencies do not usually result as locally meaningful projects. I agree, after my experience with the Chinantlan communities that local people are the ones to know better, what exactly are their needs or desires. These may be uniform within a community, as in the case of Analco or divergent, which is the situation in San Pedro. Results of this we can see in the communities' differing attitudes towards conservation and in the divisions to communal life that this causes.

Nowadays in anthropology, it is common, or even fashionable, to suggest to see people as nodes in a system of relationships (Ferguson 2015, 143). These relational people are constituted through, well, relations and they acquire their personhood through the relationships in which they participate, including the ones of hierarchy and obligations (Ferguson 2015, 143; Scherz 2014, 2). Here, relations and social membership give people recognition, as indigenous peoples have been able to acquire in the arenas of national and international environmental politics where they have entered through the relations of which they now constitute part of (Ferguson 2015, 154, 160, 162).

I would like to reflect on this idea of people as nodes and relational further, combining it with the ideas of territorial regulation and animistic traditions in Chinantla. Sometimes people do not even want autonomy, as Ferguson (2015, 153) suggests, or autonomy is constructed in relations as proposed by Ulloa. Or the local power structures, including forest spirits such as *naguas, chaneques* and *Dueños*, suggest different kind of relational hierarchies, management of territory and ways of being, resulting as dynamic and syncretic outcomes, for an example as conservation projects led by new kind of *Dueños* or *naguas,* "Jaguars" converted from environmental NGO managers. Lattas (2011, 100, 105) describes that these new power holders situate in the local context as combinations of modern, western and local ways of control. They, even using their dominating position, help also the communities to solve their territoriality and thus autonomy in front of other kinds of threats, actors and intruders, such as transnational companies, corrupted municipal politicians and neighbouring localities. Or are at least thrusted with this duty by the communities.

So, is autonomy as self-determination and independence only an ideal of outside hippies like myself, inspired by the revolutionary university faculty meetings and walls covered by paintings declaring "*death to the state*" and by alternative, more communitarian forms of civil society organization, as it seems: pursuing actually western values of independence? The proposal of seeing autonomy as "relational", as suggested

by Latin American authors such as Astrid Ulloa and Héctor Díaz-Polanco, or independence as something not even desirable, as argued by anthropologists James Ferguson and China Scherz, is on the one hand contrary to the radical ideals that I myself held before and even during the process of this study. On the other hand, this is also contrary to our common, western ideas of what autonomy is, rising from our understandings of independence based on the Enlightenment philosophy thinking of the 18th century. In these ideals mankind is unable to "live peacefully together" as in a bee society. Making relations and thus constructing autonomy contains an idea of working together in a peaceful manner as my informant Raúl, local CORENCHI technician from Analco, told me once: "*Bees are intelligent, they work together*."

Suggesting autonomy in relations and in dependency seems reasonable when reflecting on the data collected during my experience in the Chinantec communities. Differences between self-assertive community of Analco and more doubtful San Pedro show the importance of voluntariness in the construction of so called "autonomy in relations". This example of these two communities also shows the little importance that the critique towards dependence and state co-operation has in the construction of self-reliance. The community of San Pedro, rebellious as it seems, has many times followed patrons that they do not completely agree with, such as *narcos* and conservation biologists. On the other hand, Analco, eager in different forms of co-operation, has been able to respond some local needs by its open, but self-negotiated participation in different programs.

Still, even after taking idealistic "*death to the state*" wall papers down, I do not think that nature conservation in Chinantla as such promotes autonomy of the local communities. I do argue that conservation in Chinantla is very much understandable as it follows the logics of local traditional forms of control and territorial regulation determined by local cosmovisions and traditions towards personified, incarnated authority. I do think that through conservation, as dependence and relational, communities have acquired some benefits and well-being that they would not have acquired through self-separation. But I do agree with Díaz-Polanco (2011, 52-53) in that autonomy, as relational and adaptive, still should not reproduce any existing inequalities. At federal and national levels governmental aid programs, including environmental ones like conservation, can be seen as a sequence for the earlier assimilating, indigenist politics. Also, the forms of green capitalism, commercializing nature and the human-

nature relations, end up justifying the current world order with its top-down structures and global inequalities.

Conservation as a way of territorial sanctification and adaption to changing world order and values has provided a way to go on in a modified way with the traditional regulatory actions of the indigenous Chinantec territory. At the same time, it has provided the communities a way to obtain goods and services that they consider as necessities. Road projections under construction and still, the narrow paths of many hours of walking through the conservation zone by feet from community to community, embraced by the great mountains and ancient trees, are examples of these occurring changes and constancies due to the program in which these communities participate. The old men of the communities wanted development, they wanted roads and connections, but they also wanted the communities to be a good place for the future generations to live in. "*No to migration. So that people could live in their proper places. Sí. Because that is something bien bien bien… Marvellous, bien interesting here. Sí*," Don Pedro Osorio, the first president of CORENCHI, closes our conversation in front of his house in Santa Cruz Tepetotutla.

Picture 5. Beginning construction work of the road from Analco to San Antonio del Barrio.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Life in the communities continued to go through its annual routine, determined by the agricultural calendar from the time of *limas* and *tepejilotes* to the time of *mangos*, *chinenes* and *quelites*, from burning *rozo* to sow and harvest *milpa*. Still, the time has been marked by some considerable changes. The community of San Pedro got again integrated into the commercial honey production by communal enterprises. The PRI party won the local municipal president's election in 2016. This has brought no changes to the concrete needs for better communication and services expressed by the local communities. In 2017 the Spanish greentech company renewed its claim to put a hydroelectric dam in the zone. This has been disclaimed by all the communities of the region. Also, the waste water deep, already under construction in the community of San Pedro, was renounced by a reclamation of the neighbouring community of Santiago Tlatepusco.

Meanwhile I returned to my home country and finished up writing this study.

In this thesis, I have reflected on questions about indigenous autonomy and dependence through relations of power and analysis of different actors, a typical approach to the studies of political ecology. In chapter three, under my scope was the state controlling its minorities and in chapter five the environmental actors: non-governmental organizations and individuals. In chapter four, I discussed local territorial control by the beings of nature, present in local cosmovisions. In this study, I have reflected on how the rules and personified authority of the conservation program come to fulfil the forms of regulation determined in the local cosmovision of territorial control. This way the sacred ethnoterritory, a concept of Alicia Barabas, becomes again meaningful in the era of global environmental worry and conservation. This, and the perceptions of various authors like Héctor Díaz-Polanco, Astrid Ulloa and James Ferguson about construction of autonomy in relations or as search for dependency in order to gain development make the participation in a governmental conservation program understandable from the local point of view. This is also suggested by the significant differences in the attitudes of the two communities, San Antonio Analco and San Pedro Tlatepusco, towards conservation. In San Pedro, religious, Evangelic conversion has resulted as conservation losing its sense. Instead, community members have a strong belief in the coming "hard times", end of the world preceded by the warming climate. Also, a confrontation between environmental

actors has made the community of San Pedro doubtful towards the conservation program taking place in its territory.

Still, unlike anthropological studies considering autonomy in relations and dependency, in this study I argue that the communities have not gained autonomy through the governmental conservation program in which they participate. Neither do I wish to reaffirm popular and academic ideas of autonomy as independence or self-separation from the state. At the local level, communities do obtain certain benefits, "development", and the program stems with their conceptions of territorial control adapting to the controlling models and figures present in their local cosmovision. But at national and global levels, program ends up to revalidate the current situation of unequal power structures maintaining both the discursive and material differences between indigenous and *mestizo*, and the mental distance to the "zones of high marginalization". Stepping with my study in between now seemingly radical, academic, anthropological, popular and political views for dependence and on the other hand for independence, I argue that even confirming the local values of nature, taking form as appreciation and care through control, participation in a governmental nature conservation program at the same time confirms national inequalities inherent in the current Mexican society and, also, the global unequal power structures reflected in the processes of green capitalism taking place at local territories worldwide.

My recommendation for further investigation in Chinantla has to do with an interesting study scene for an infusion of economic and political anthropology gone to the analysis of myths and local cosmovisions in terms of beekeeping. I have presented a little bit of it in this thesis, but more focused study would be necessary. At the same time, rising tendencies towards commercial honey production of "the European" or "African" bees (*ha-cu)* and the care for the fate of the native bees (*to)* present an interesting scenario to study power structures and entrance of market economy at local and global levels. The wide and partly forgotten knowledge considering native bees, present in the exact descriptions and naming patterns and in the knowledge contradicting with scientific information as in the case of "poisonous honey", are suggestive of an interesting cultural importance of these bees and ask for further investigation.

Meanwhile, for the moment:

"*The jaguar leapt to the hill."*

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Vocabulary and abbreviations

Chinanteco – English

Chinantec dialects are generally not written. In the dialect of San Antonio Analco there is yeat no established writing system. In the dialect of San Pedro, there exists a textbook of which a copy is found with one individual household in the community. Still, in both of the communities, there might be only couple of persons capable of writing the local dialect. This dictionary is collected by me and based on my hearing and understanding of Chinantec writing.

I have spelled the words to respond the rules of pronunciation of Spanish language. Marking of tonality by numbers corresponds the instructions of the textbook conserved in San Pedro[77]. Symbols and instructions for pronouncing:

´ = rising intonation (Spanish)

^{1} = low

^{2} = middle

^{3} = high pronunciation of the letter

- = tonality (example: *ā* = something between o and u)

Uêɜ ja, chan$_{2}$^{1}ia^{1}$_{2}$li = place, where jaguars live (Santa Cruz)

Aw^{3}hmāy^{13} = Analco or in between two brooks (Analco)

[77] An alternative way to mark high and low tonality by lines under letters (corresponding the numbers used here) was shown to me in Analco by local older school students. They had been shown how to write in their dialect by a rural school teacher exceptionally originating from their own community. Marking tonality by numbers can be converted to the system based on lines in the following way: *a la^{1} ní-nu? -> a l<u>a</u> ní-nu?* = how are you? (Analco)

Varieties of crayfish (San Pedro):

cac-mó = “lobster”

ta³j-mo¹a or “*camaron 3*”

ta-qu¹á

Díu³ Ku²i³ = God of corn (San Pedro)

Ja-cun = “African” or “European” bee, *Apis mellifera* (Analco)

Ka¹a íí³? = Did you eat (tortilla)? (Analco)

Mat-chu³ = “Corona beer” (Analco)

Mat-chup³ = “Let’s go!” (Analco)

Ma² yu¹ = mother of someone (Analco)

Ne¹e quó³? = Where are you going? (Analco)

Sa²Pe³ = San Pedro (San Pedro)

Te¹ = this bird, like a humming bird that gives a warning (Analco)

To = native bee, *Meliponini* (Analco)

to-cun = stripy patterning, makes a hive of beeswax without a tube in trees

to-djie = small, *chiquito,* as a grain of sand

to-dun = red or oranguish, sticks into one’s hair, makes its hive with a tube to trees

to-ia = ‘the bee of the kettle’, black and brown, *cafecito,* makes its hive underground

toj-lej = the black bee, broad = *lej,* bites and annoys, makes its hive in the form of a ball in trees, its honey is a bit poisonous

to-líi = ‘the flowery bee’, has its wings of two different colours like the flowers, body of two different colours: brown and yellow, makes its hive underground

to-zi = brightly coloured, has a sting

Institutions and other abbreviations

CDI, Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas *National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages,* State institution for indigenous affairs

CEPCO, Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca *Coordinator for coffee Producers in the State of Oaxaca,* Umbrella organization for Oaxacan coffee producers, created in 1989 to alleviate the crisis in production

CIIDIR, Instituto Polítecnico Nacional, Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación para el Desarrollo Integral Regional Unidad Oaxaca *Regional Interdisciplinary Investigation Centre for Integral Development,* Investigation unit in Oaxaca, part of the National Polytechnic Institute

CONABIO, Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad *National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity,* State institution coordinating activities associated to knowledge on biodiversity

CONAFOR, Comisión Nacional Forestal *National Forest Commission,* State institution dedicated to the questions of forest use

CONANP, Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas *National Commission for Natural Protected Areas,* State institution dedicated to the conservation of natural patrimony

CORENCHI A.C., Comité de Recursos Naturales de la Chinantla Alta *Natural Resources Committee of the Upper Chinantla,* Civil organization conformed by four Chinantec communities for nature conservation

DICONSA State sponsored rural grocery stores

DIF, Desarrollo Integral de la Familia *Integral Family Development,* State aid program for families

ENERSI Spanish green tech company

GDF, Global Diversity Foundation An internationally based environmental organization

Geo, Geoconservación A.C. Oaxacan environmental civil organization, technical advisor of CORENCHI for environmental conservation

INI, Instituto Nacional Indigenista *National Indigenist Institution,* predecessor of CDI

INMECAFÉ, Instituto Mexicano del Café *Mexican Coffee Institute,* Government-based institute to stabilize and regulate coffee production, disintegrated in 1989

Luz de la Chinantla *Light of Chinantla,* Local co-operative for coffee production, based in Santa Cruz Tepetotutla

Manejo Integral de Ecosistemas *Integral Management of Ecosystems,* One of the earlier environmental programs displayed in the communities of CORENCHI in 2002

MORENA, Movimiento Regeneración Nacional *National Regeneration Movement,* Political party

NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement Free trade agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States, stepped into force in the beginning of 1994

NGO, Non-governmental organization

Ordenamiento territorial comunitario *Communitarian territorial order,* Communal agreement for sustainable land use

PAIR-UNAM Investigation group from the National University, operating in Chinantla during the 1990's

PAN, Partido Acción Nacional *National Action Party,* Political party

PES, Payments for Ecosystem Services Program for environmental conservation promoted by the United Nations

PIMAF, Programa de Apoyos para Productores de Maíz y Frijol *Aid Program for Producers of Corn and Beans,* Governmental aid program

PRD, Partido de la Revolución Democrática *Democratic Revolution Party,* Political party

PRI, Partido Revolucionario Institucional *Institutional Revolutionary Party,* The oldest political party in Mexico, has a customary hold of many rural habitats

PROAGRO, **Programa de Fomento a la Agricultura** *Program for the Promotion of Agriculture***,** Governmental aid program for farmers

PROCYMAF, Proyecto de Conservación y Manejo Sustentable de Recursos Forestales en México *Project for Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Mexico,* One of the earliest governmental conservation projects into which the communities of CORENCHI participated

PRODERS, Programas de Desarrollo Sustentable *Programs for Sustainable Development,* One of the early governmental programs that the CORENCHI communities participated in, promoted by the Mexican environmental ministry

Programa de Mejores Prácticas de Manejo *Program for the Best Management Practices,* Plan for territorial management needed to possess in order to receive governmental funds for ecosystem services

PROSPERA, Programa de Inclusión Social *Program for Social Inclusion,* Governmental aid program, mainly directed to women and children

REDD+, Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation Mechanism promoted by the United Nations to reduce emissions by financially compensating for stored carbon

Sagarpa, Secretaría de agricultura, ganadería, desarrollo rural y pesca y alimentación *Ministry of agriculture, livestock rearing, rural development and fishing and alimentation*

SEMARNAP Earlier Environmental Ministry in Mexico

SEMARNAT, Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales *Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources,* Mexican environmental Ministry

UAM Iztapalapa, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, La Unidad Iztapalapa *Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa*, University in Mexico City

UNAM, Universidad Nacional Autónoma *National Autonomous University,* Biggest public university in Mexico

Mexican cultural terminology – English

Note: In the straight interview quotes of this thesis I have left with purpose some expressions in Spanish (such as *pues, este* etc.). These expressions do not have a good, equivalent translation and are descriptive of the persons' way of expression. Leaving them without a translation does not change the contents or meanings of the statements.

abuelito Grandfather

acahual Cultivation area resting before being exposed to fire again in the shifting cultivation method

agencia Communal agent's office

aguardiente Strong alcoholic drink, fermented of sugar cane

analqueño Person from the community of San Antonio Analco

anciano Old person

arroyo Small brook

autodefensa Self-defensive movement

ayuntamiento, cabildo Organization of municipal administration

barrio, colonia Neighbourhood

bodega Storage

bosque virgen Untouched forest

cabecera Municipal centre

cacique Mediator

caldo de piedra Traditional soup from San Felipe Usila: fish and vegetables are cooked in a bowl or in a rocky hole by a heated rock

campo Going to "*campo"* refers here to the farmwork taking place outside the inhabited, communal zones

cancha Basketball field

cargo Binding, remunerative offices, system of *cargos* forms part of the communal administration by *usos y costumbres*

carpete básica Official documentation of communal territorial limits

chaneque Small, child-like guardians and spirits of water in the Chinantec territory

chicharron Deep fried pork meat

chinene Fruit from the family of avocado

colindancía Frontier between two communities

comisariado Officer of common goods and the respective office space

comunalidad A term to describe the communal life, originating from the Mixe mountains and the Zapotec communities of Sierra Norte

comunero Community member with a right to land ownership and with the responsibility to participate in communal assemblies and to serve *cargo* offices

costal Sack

criollo Local, originating from the place

cuñada Sister-in-law

curandero Natural healer

dialecto Indigenous laguage

dueño Master

ejido Communal land for cultivation

estatuto comunal Communal statement, in CORENCHI communities establish the rules for nature conservation

feria Festival

guardaraya Irrigation around the area to be exposed to fire in shifting cultivation method

hacienda Colonial rule in which indigenous peoples worked their lands owned by the Spanish crown

hierbamora Edible green leaves

huipil Female blouses embroidered with local symbolic figures

indigenismo Assimilative state politics

jicama Mexican turnip, a type of a root vegetable

lima A citric fruit

lucha Struggle

machete Jungle knife

machismo Male domination and female subordination as a cultural feature

mamey Mammee apple

manglar Mangrove

mecapal A belt to put on one's forehead in order to carry heavy loads on one's back

mestizo Mixed (Spanish-indigenous) background

mezcal Alcoholic drink typical to Mexico and especially to Oaxaca, distilled from *magey* cactuses

milpa Cultivation zone composed of different edibles growing in several levels and maturing at different moments

morral A textile back

mototaxi Small wagons of two passengers operating as taxi for short distances

mozo Person helping to burn the cultivation zones in the method of shifting cultivation

nagua/l Person capable to take an animal form

narco Person involved in drug business or drug business generally speaking

paisano Countryman, person from the same zone

potrero Pasture zone

quelite Edible green leaves

rancho A farm situated separately from the inhabited centres

roya Plant disease

Señorio Administrative zone of the ancient Chinantla

servieta Embroidered cloth

temporada Summer cultivation, takes place in June

tepejilote Wild esparragus

tepezcuintle Lowland paca

tequio Binding communal work, part of the communal organization by *usos y costumbres*

titulo Here: legal position as an indigenous community

tlatepusqueño Person from San Pedro Tlatepusco

tomatillo Local, small tomatoes

tonamil Winter cultivation time, takes place in November – December

tortilla Corn crêpes accompanying every meal

tumba, quema y rozo Shifting cultivation method by clearing, burning and mulching

usileño Person from San Felipe Usila

usos y costumbres Local, "traditional", autonomous administrative order

zacate High and sharply cutting hay, earlier used as durable construction material

Zapatismo Indigenous autonomous movement from the state of Chiapas

Appendix 2. Pictures

Note: Pictures taken by the author.

Pictures, Analco

Picture 1. "*It looks really beautiful,"* colourful houses built in the mountain side. View upwards from *cancha*, basketball field and the center for communal life.

Picture 2. "*Bees are intelligent, they work together,"* communal beekeeping in the shared apiary. Beekeeper is looking for the queen.

Picture 3. Plant disease *roya* affecting coffee plantations. Raúl showing me the leaf on our way to the river.

Picture 4. "*It's deep in there,"* Río Grande river in the altitude of the community. That day we went to the river with biologists to look for hives of native bees.

Pictures, San Pedro

Picture 7. Going to *campo* in Monte Siloe, passing *milpa* and *rozo,* faced by the conserved forest. Pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist church decided to abandon the community in order to live closer to his cultivation areas, three hours walk away from the communal centre. I am grateful of the several occasions that I was invited to Monte Siloe with the family.

Picture 8. Looking for small fish, *pececitos,* with Camila's daughter. We had followed the river further down from the community to take the mule back to the community for the night.

Picture 9. "*People won't go voting, if I don't kill a cow,"* I was told by PRI's electoral precandidate. Last pribes, two nights before the elections. I left the community early before the sunrise. Couple of hours earlier all the *comuneros* were still in the basketball field sharing the meat, equally, a par to everyone.

Picture 10. Entrance to "20 municipalities" inhabited by *naguas*, on our way to Usila.

Other pictures

Picture 11. Third *feria* of biological diversity and Chinantec cultures. Children performing in Santa Cruz.

Picture 12. Mainroad of the municipal center, San Felipe Usila.

Picture 13. View to Chinantla opening from the dam Cerro de Oro.